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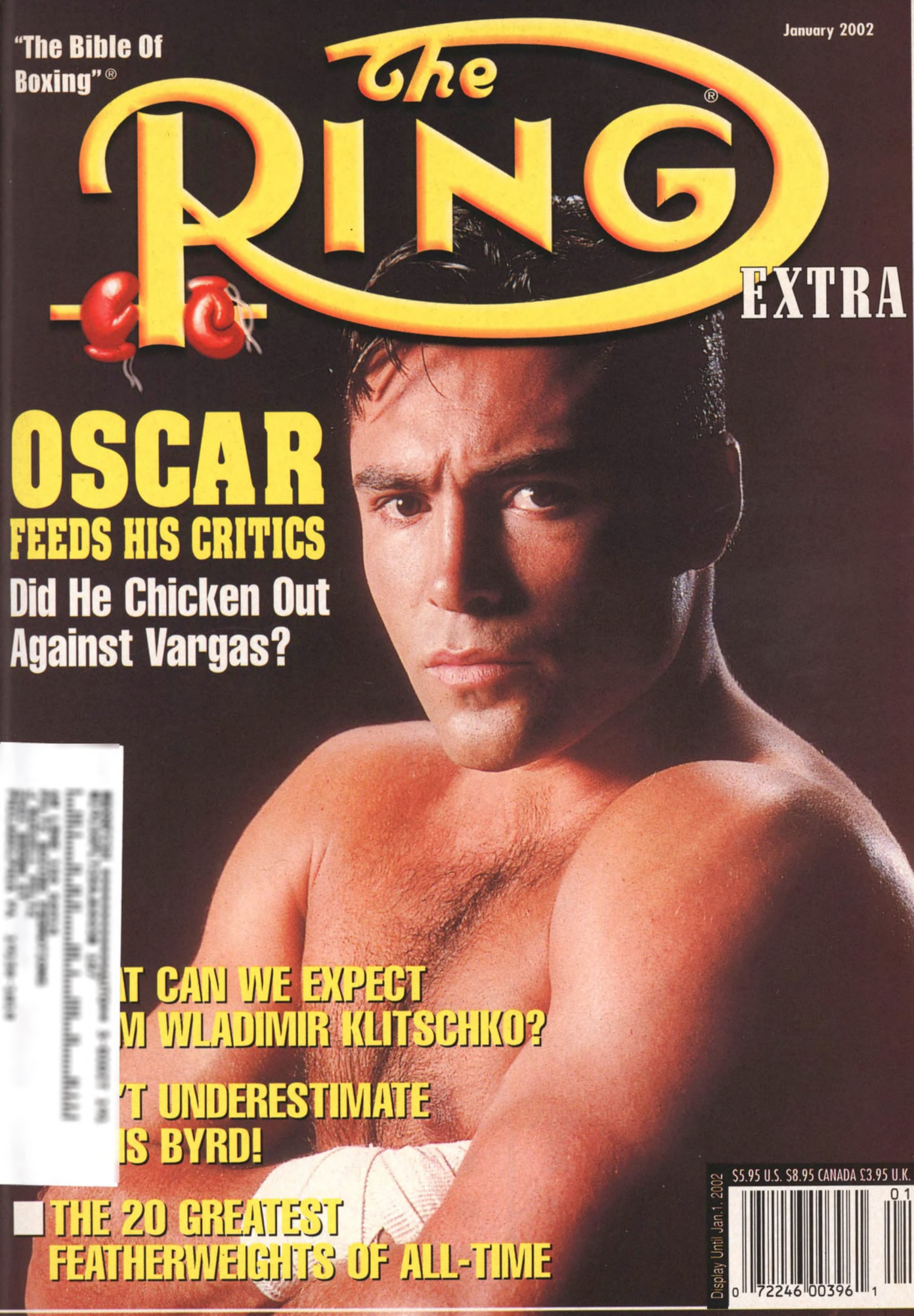

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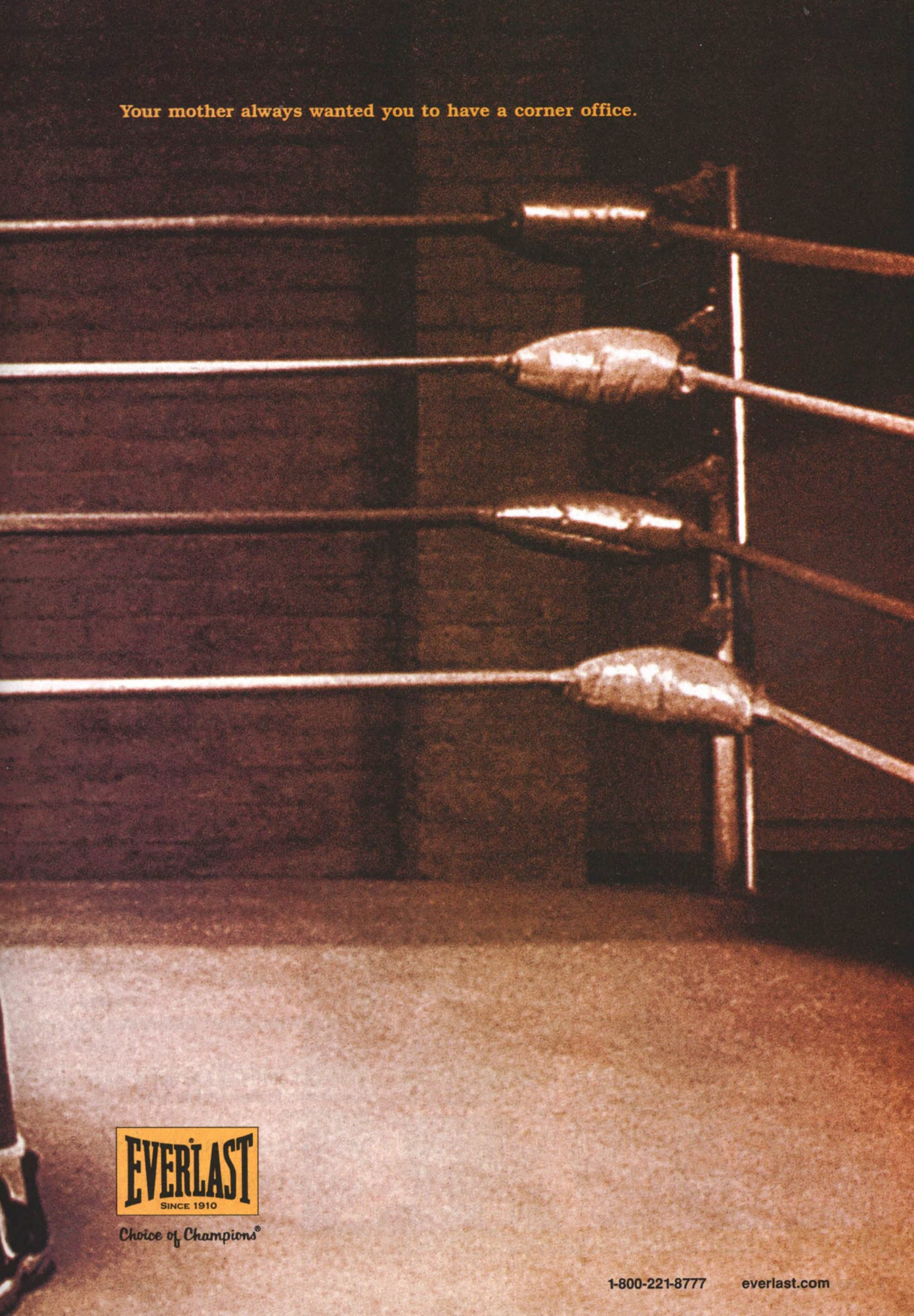
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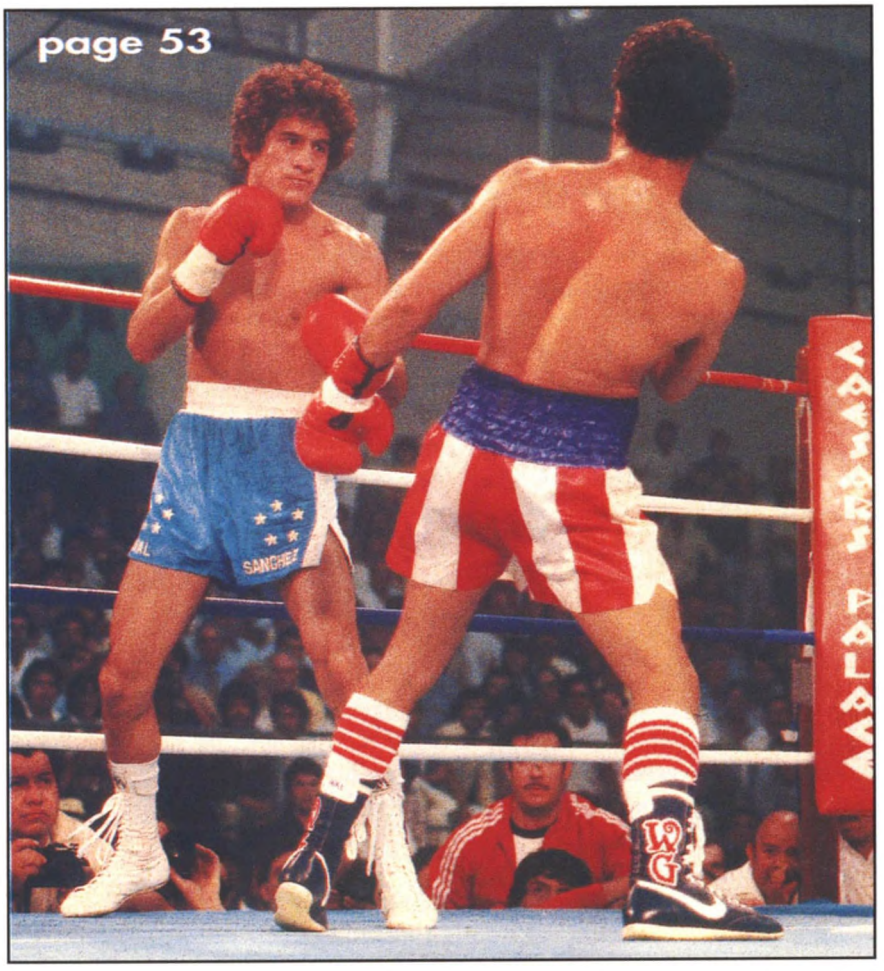

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over: *Oscar De La Hoya by Greg Gorman/HBO*
Cover Design: *Joseph Kalman*

RINGSIDE

Isn't it funny how a little impromptu misbehavior can stir up the masses? First, it was Bernard Hopkins disrespecting the Puerto Rican flag in San Juan, then Hasim Rahman and Lennox Lewis breaking up a TV studio in Anaheim. Suddenly, boxing was front-page news again, and people were talking about it with an enthusiasm normally reserved for the sexual misadventures of politicians.

I'm of two minds concerning these two highly publicized incidents. On the one hand, it's wonderful to see the Sweet Science get the attention it deserves. But it's distressing to realize that good fights, in and of themselves, are virtually ignored by the mainstream media unless there's some sort of scandal surrounding them.

True, video replays of Hopkins fleeing from an angry mob and Rahman shoving Lewis through a desk were great for pay-per-view sales. But why did it take a couple of sophomoric episodes to put the Rahman-Lewis and Hopkins-Felix Trinidad bouts in the spotlight? Moreover, why don't quality matches in general get the coverage they merit?

I'll tell you why: The editors and producers responsible for newspaper and television sports coverage are, by and large, ignorant. They know no more about boxing than I know about quantum physics, and what's even more annoying, they don't want to know. It's easier to stay stupid and pretend boxing doesn't exist.

I think it's this glaring lack of knowledge that fosters the patronizing attitude so many TV types have toward boxing. I'm referring to the supercilious talking heads who smirk their way through whatever condescending boxing coverage their know-nothing bosses allow them to report. After all, when you're too dumb to talk sense, sarcasm is your best ally.

There was a time when members of the mainstream media knew boxing, knew how to analyze the strengths and weaknesses of various fighters, understood styles and strategies. Some of them actually went to the gyms and talked with the fighters and trainers, of all things. There are still folks like that around, but don't expect to see them on TV sports news or enriching the pages of many newspapers.

The media is not the only culprit. Contemporary culture also plays a role. Sensationalism and tabloid-style reporting have permeated much of today's news, sports or otherwise. And let's face it, boxing has always had an uncanny capacity for generating lurid headlines. You can't blame the media for that.

Also, whether we want to admit it or not, boxing doesn't enjoy the mass audience it once did. But I think the remarkable interest created by the Hopkins-Trinidad and Rahman-Lewis incidents prove that there's plenty of life left in the most fundamental of sports—if only the general public knows what's going on.

I have no simple solution to a problem that's been brewing for decades. Sadly, even the best of fights and fighters seem to have little or no impact on those deciding what's important enough to be considered news. But I do have one suggestion that they will be sure to understand: The next time some blown-dry, smug-looking sportscaster makes a snide remark about boxing, let's have Rahman slam dunk *him* through a table.

Nigel Collins
Editor-in-Chief

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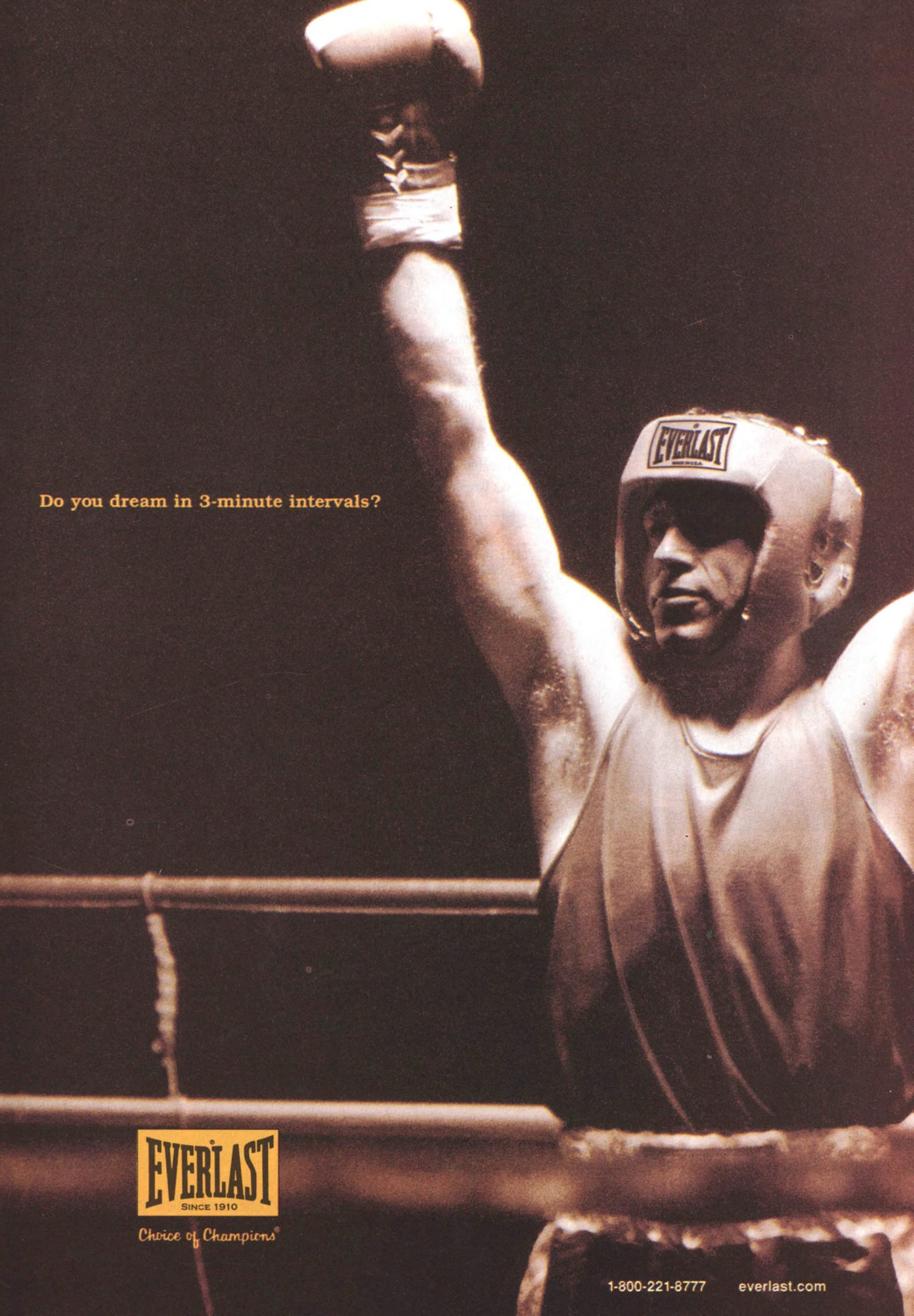

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ROUND ONE

RAHMAN 2, LEWIS 0

Nobody in the mainstream sports world knew who Hasim Rahman was when he left for South Africa last spring. Sadly, when he came back the heavyweight champion of the world, a lot of people still didn't know who he was, and most of the folks who did were mispronouncing his name. But now, as Rahman's rematch with former champion Lennox Lewis approaches, "The Rock" is finally a somebody to mainstream America, even if it took a less-than-admirable display of political incorrectness and raging testosterone on August 30 in Anaheim, California, to get him there.

By now you've probably seen the clip two dozen times: On the set of ESPN's *Up Close*, interviewer Gary Miller asks Lewis whether Rahman has questioned his sexuality; Lewis asserts that Rahman called him "gay"; Rahman explains that he didn't say Lewis was gay, he said it was gay for Lewis to use the legal system to force a rematch; Lewis invites Rahman to bring his sister if he's unsure of the big Brit's sexual preference; Rahman tells Lewis not to bring family into the discussion; both men stand up and jaw with each other until Lewis puts his hand on Rahman's midsection, igniting a wrestling match; Rahman throws Lewis through a table and falls on top of him, while Lewis tries to kick Rahman off; and the entourages finally separate the heavyweights, though Lewis tries repeatedly to get at Rahman.

Rahman and Lewis destroy the set

So was it real or was it staged? The arguments that the brawl was orchestrated to boost pay-per-view sales include the fact that no punches were thrown and that there were no side fights between members of the fighters' posses. On the other hand, though, would Lewis allow himself to look weak and get manhandled if he had been in on the planning of the scrap? Would the fighters risk serious injury by going through a thick formica table? Miller, who had the most up-close view of all, thought the fight was for real.

"I think it may have been intended to be theater at first," Miller said the day after the fighters caused $2,000 damage to his set. "But there was a real threatening atmosphere here, and what happened is beyond what normally happens to try and hype a fight."

Mark Taffet, senior vice president of pay-per-view distributor TVKO, was also on hand for the melee, and he is even more certain than Miller that it was on the level.

"My heart was pounding at a rate that I don't think it ever pounded at," Taffet said. "It was completely real, and it was very unnerving."

Miller and Taffet are in the minority, though, as 58 percent of the respondents to an ESPN poll said they thought the fracas was staged, a distressing indicator of the public's skeptical view toward the legitimacy of boxing. But at least they know now who Rahman is, and they got to know the smart-talking champ even better when they saw clips of the next day's Las Vegas press conference. The Rock goaded Lewis into trying to charge at him again, then belittled him with what ESPN analyst Max Kellerman called "some of the best smack-talking I've heard in a long time."

"Thank you, Lennox," Rahman laughed. "Thank you, thank you. You bought my new house, my new car. I might as well put 'LENNOX' on my license tag."

And the excited Taffet just might put "RAHMAN" on his, as he feels these episodes will help pay-per-view sales enormously.

"People who thought Rahman won in Africa on a lucky punch now believe Rahman-Lewis II is a real fight and a very even fight," Taffet said. "This incident certainly enhanced the credibility of Rahman."

—Eric Raskin

PAIR CHARGED WITH FIGHT FIXING

Usually, prospects are built by matching them with opponents their handlers know aren't good enough to beat their boy. In boxing parlance, it's called a "set-up." You see this sort of fight all the time. But sometimes the guy whose record they're trying to pad is so inept, the scumbags resort to something even more reprehensible than a blatant mismatch—the fix.

According to a federal grand jury, that's what happened when heavyweight Richie Melito stopped Thomas Williams in the first round on August 12, 2000, in Las Vegas. Following a year-long investigation, Williams and matchmaker Robert "Bobby" Mitchell were both indicted on fight-fixing charges, which allege that Williams accepted a bribe to take a dive against Melito. If both men are convicted, they face up to five years in prison plus $500,000 in fines.

Rumors that the Melito-Williams match wasn't on the level intensified when the fight, which was part of the Evander Holyfield-John Ruiz I undercard, went on at 4 p.m., before the public or media was admitted to the Paris Hotel & Casino in Las Vegas.

The indictment also alleges that unnamed individuals, including professional boxers, conspired with Mitchell to throw additional fights. Melito, who has "won" 25 of 26 pro bouts, was not charged.

FBI spokesman Daron Borst said Mitchell and Williams, both from Irmo, South Carolina, will be extradited to Las Vegas, but would not say whether the federal government is pursuing charges against other suspects.

"The investigation is continuing," said Borst.

PHOTO BY MARTY ROSENGARTEN

Melito is beaten by Bert Cooper in '97

AMERICA PRESENTS CHANGE

It had been rumored for some time that America Presents, the Denver, Colorado-based promotional company that started in 1996, was losing money. Then in late-August, an apparent confirmation came with the departure of Dan Goossen, the company's president, primarily over financial issues.

Mat Tinley, the America Presents CEO whose billionaire uncle Bill Daniels had financed the company until his death last year, was displeased with Goossen's spending. It also did not help that no America Presents fighter had scored a major victory in some time.

"Mat wanted to take control of the company on a day-to-day basis, and that's when Dan handed in his resignation," said America Presents Vice President Fred Sternberg. "Dan didn't treat this as some ordinary job. Dan ran this as if it was his own company, good or bad, and he was spending and investing as if this was his own company. In fairness to Dan, we had a lot of success with the way Dan was doing things."

PHOTO BY BRIAN CANNON/DKP

Tinley and Goossen (standing in back of David Reid and Marvin Garris) have parted ways

But in Tinley's eyes, the results weren't correlating with the spending. And that wasn't the only problem.

"Dan wanted to expand our Las Vegas office, but that's something Mat may not have agreed with," Sternberg said. "It was just a difference of philosophy."

Goossen has moved on and is in the process of restarting his own promotional company, Ten Goose Sports.

"We've already started the paperwork for Ten Goose Sports and we're looking to come back at the major level," Goossen said. "Hopefully, this time around I've got fighters that get their hands raised in the big fights."

Meanwhile, America Presents still has a pair of 130-pound world champions, Steve Forbes and Joel Casamayor, plus rising heavyweight Fres Oquendo, and a five-year TV deal with Fox Sports.

—Joe Santoliquito

TV FIGHTS OF THE MONTH

DATE	WINNER/LOSER	NETWORK	DIVISION	SIGNIFICANCE	MATCHUP	RESULT
8-7-01	Julio Diaz KO 4 Dairo Esalas	ESPN2	l	B-	A	A-
Diaz rises from second-round knockdown to stop fellow prospect in outstanding matchup						
8-10-01	Daniel Alicea D 10 Julian Wheeler	ESPN2	l	C+	C+	C+
Alicea threw more, Wheeler threw better; depends on what you like						
8-10-01	Ben Tackie W 12 Ray Oliveira	ESPN2	jw	B	A-	B+
Tackie too strong, too steady; and imagine what Oliveira could do with a little power						
8-11-01	Michael Bennett KO 1 Wes Taylor	HBO	h	C	B+	C+
If you ask us, Taylor's stoppage of Bennett was more conclusive						
8-11-01	Ricardo Williams KO 3 Rodney Jones	HBO	jw	C+	C-	C
Forget how many fights Jones had; how many chubby blond guys do you know who can fight?						
8-11-01	Jermain Taylor KO 5 Efrain Garcia	HBO	m	C	C+	C
For Taylor, good lesson learned early: Beat the body						
8-12-01	Corey Sanders KO 9 Paea Wolfgramm	FOXSN	h	C-	C+	D-
Imagine that, Sanders: Throwing punches is a good idea when you're in a fight						
8-17-01	Emil Baku W 10 Ronald Weaver	ESPN2	m	C	B+	C+
Lousy decision, but did you ever wonder how good Weaver might be if he got serious?						
8-17-01	Cory Spinks W 12 Larry Marks	ESPN2	w	B-	B+	C-
This Spinks might be the most efficient and most boring of the clan						
8-18-01	Kermit Cintron KO 5 Said Ouali	Show	w	C-	B+	C
Cintron might be a hitter, but we can't tell from this; Ouali went down from the first touch						
8-18-01	Emmanuel Lucero W 12 John Lowey	Show	jf	C+	B+	C-
Good fight on paper turns into stinker; Lucero not equal to the hype						
8-18-01	Chris Byrd W 12 David Tua	Show	h	A	A	B
Who says Byrd's not powerful? He knocked Dan Goossen out of America Presents, didn't he?						
8-24-01	Vernon Forrest KO 4 Edgar Ruiz	ESPN2	jm	A-	D+	C+
Typical Forrest: workmanlike, unspectacular, and worth not a penny more than 1.5 mil						
9-1-01	Rocky Juarez W 6 Juan Rafael Gutierrez	Show	f	C	B-	C+
Gutierrez hangs tough, but Juarez, even without a big punch, is the goods						
9-1-01	Juan Diaz W 6 Ubaldo Hernandez	Show	l	C-	C+	C+
Every guy who's ever lost to Diaz and watched him blubber through this postfight interview had to think: "I lost to that?"						
9-1-01	Juan Lazcano KO 4 Julio Alvarez	Show	l	B+	C+	B
Lazcano recovers from second-round shellacking to stop ill-prepared Alvarez						
9-2-01	Fres Oquendo KO 11 Obed Sullivan	FOXSN	h	B-	D+	C
Are you sure Felix Trinidad and Oquendo are trained by the same guy?						
9-7-01	Kassim Ouma W 10 Verno Phillips	ESPN2	jm	C	B+	A-
If this made you get off the recliner and give the guys a standing ovation, you're not alone						
9-7-01	O'Neil Bell KO 11 Arthur Williams	ESPN2	c	C+	B	C-
If this made you browse through the channels looking for something more exciting to watch, you're not alone						
9-8-01	**Vassiliy Jirov KO 8 Julian Letterlough**	**HBO**	**IBF c**	**A-**	**C**	**B-**
Of course "Mr. KO" had no chance, but wasn't it fun when he staggered Jirov with that hook?						
9-8-01	Marco Antonio Barrera KO 6 Enrique Sanchez	HBO	f	A	C	B
If you're surprised at how good Barrera looks, imagine how Junior Jones feels						

Category Explanation: "Significance"—The importance of the bout to the division and the fighters' futures; "Matchup"—The quality of the fighters and the prefight determination of how their styles will mesh; "Result"—How the bout turned out, from the viewer's perspective.

(World title fights in **bold** type)

Division key: h—heavyweight; c—cruiserweight; lh—light heavyweight; sm—super middleweight; m—middleweight; jm—junior middleweight; w—welterweight; jw—junior welterweight; l—lightweight; jl—junior lightweight; f—featherweight; jf—junior featherweight; b—bantamweight; jb—junior bantamweight; fl—flyweight; jfl—junior flyweight; s—strawweight

Network key: PPV—Pay-Per-View; Show—Showtime; FOXSN—Fox SportsNet; Uni—Univision; Tel—Telemundo

THE BOXING BOOKSHELF

The most eye-popping passage in *Training For Boxers*, the hoary how-to manual brought out eons ago by Nat Fleischer, founder of THE RING, and relied on by past generations of aspiring pugilists, was its stentorian identification of masturbation as the scourge of mankind.

Mankind can speak for itself, but the scourge of boxing is ignorance, and while *Ringside And Training Principles*, a brand new guide prepared under the auspices of the Nevada State Athletic Commission, does not go into the above-named delicate area, the 174-page volume covers just about everything else a boxer needs to know to make enlightened decisions about his career.

"Nobody tries to give boxers any respect," said Dr. Margaret Goodman, the Las Vegas neurosurgeon and ringside physician who edited and contributed to the book. "They're treated like children. Nobody educates the fighters, and they're the ones who need to be talked to. So we're trying to improve the sport by getting the boxer to try to bear some of the responsibility for what happens to him."

No other book or booklet I've seen in 36 years of reading, researching, and writing about boxing offers such a wide and diverse range of useful information, all of it presented plainly and in terms you don't have to be a Gene Tunney to follow. There are Q & As with Teddy Atlas, Jesse Reid, Sugar Ray Leonard, and the Mosleys, father and son, about training. Expert cutmen share their expertise. Ringside doctors, referees, and inspectors tell what they look for before, during, and after a bout. You can find out what's the best mouthpiece for you, how boxing gloves are made ("Isn't that important for a fighter to know about?" asked Dr. Goodman. "His whole career is in his hands."), and even "How To Handle Losing A Fight."

Protecting yourself at all times doesn't mean just between the ropes. According to Dr. Goodman, early feedback indicates that the most popular section of the book with boxers is "Financial And Legal Recommendations To Fighters/Understanding Matchmaking." Old-time towel slingers may regard this and the other information placed in the hands of their meal tickets as downright subversive, but knowledge is power, says Dr. Goodman, and "sometimes a fighter has to stand up and say 'No,' and sometimes he has to say 'Yes.'"

Ringside And Training Principles gives him the tools. Amassing and sharing information "is the only way we can guarantee some improvement in boxing," Dr. Goodman said. "Great Britain has a system of national health care, and they can do any test they want on fighters. But the answer is not more tests, but rather getting a fighter to think about what he needs to do for his career. We need people looking out for themselves."

Toward that end, *Ringside And Training Principles* is available to anyone for just the cost of postage. An 8" x 11" self-addressed envelope with $1.33 in postage will get you a copy. Send it to: Nevada Athletic Commission, 555 E. Washington Ave., #1500, Las Vegas, NV 89101.

The book comes in both English and Spanish editions. It's a one-of-a-kind reference guide that ought to be mandatory reading for every boxer.

"We may not know everything," said Dr. Goodman, "but we can tell some things, like why you shouldn't take aspirin before a fight. There's just a lot of information that needs to be shared, and that will make it a safer sport."

To pass up such an offer would be a sin at least as grievous as the one deplored by Reverend Fleischer, with potentially more dire consequences.

—Pete Ehrmann

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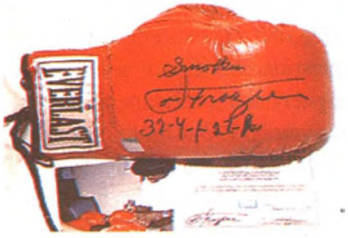

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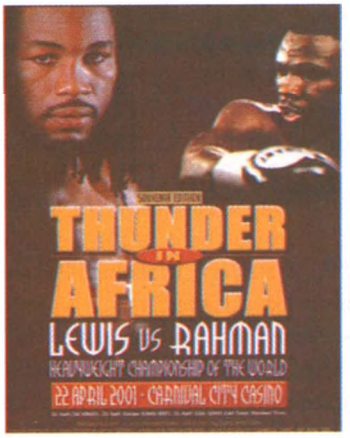

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OUTSIDE THE ROPES

Wolfgramm: Hefty heavyweight retires

We've known for more than a decade that **Mike Tyson** has been slipping as a fighter, but now we know he's also slipping with the quality of the ladies he goes after. Whereas he used to get into trouble with the law for his alleged assaults on young, attractive women, he ran into trouble this past July for allegedly raping 50-year-old **Arlene Moorman** in California. But prosecutors decided in mid-August not to file charges, saying there wasn't enough evidence to prove the crime beyond a reasonable doubt. Moorman's attorney, **Gloria Allred**, said a civil suit is still a possibility … Two-division former champion **Johnny Tapia's** "vida loca" got a little more "loca" recently. First, Tapia told the *Albuquerque Journal* in mid-August that he had decided to retire from boxing, a strange decision given his effectiveness in the ring lately and his potential to make big money in the near future. Then, in late-August, rumors spread that Tapia had attempted suicide. His wife/manager **Teresa**, however, said those reports were untrue, but acknowledged that her husband had been battling depression. Whether or not he actually intends to retire remained a mystery as of press time … In other retirement news, 300-pound heavyweight **Wolfgramm**, a '96 Olympic silver medalist, announced that he was hanging up the gloves after suffering a ninth-round knockout loss to **Corey Sanders** in mid-August … It just gets worse for recently retired great **Pernell Whitaker**. In mid-August, when in court on his way to a four-day jail stint for traffic violations, Whitaker was patted down and found to be in possession of cocaine. He was released on $2,500 bond, but could face more jail time … The beleaguered New York State Athletic Commission announced in late-August that **Mel Southard** had stepped down as commission head and would be replaced by **Ray Kelly**, who served as New York City Police Commissioner from 1992-'94 … Retired former WBA lightweight titlist **Joey Gamache** just got $2-million richer. He reached a settlement with United Kingfield Bank of Bangor (Maine) in early-August, resulting from the bank backing out of a commitment to lend him $285,000 to open a restaurant, thus costing Gamache his life savings … Top lightweight prospect **Miguel Cotto** suffered a broken right hand when he fell asleep behind the wheel of his car and crashed into a wall on his way to an early-morning workout in mid-August. The Puerto Rican Olympian is expected to be out of action for four to five months … Nevada Athletic Commission chairman **Dr. Elias Ghanem** died in late-August at the age of 62 after a lengthy battle with cancer. In his final days, Ghanem reportedly received a phone call from Mike Tyson and a visit from **Bill Clinton**, whose mother had been treated by the Las Vegas-based Lebanese doctor several years ago … Tragedy struck twice in Japan. Former featherweight contender **Seiji Asakawa** drowned after falling from his fishing boat in late-July. Asakawa, 33, challenged twice for the WBA 126-pound title, losing to **Yung Kyun Park** in '92 and to **Eloy Rojas** in '94. And in early-August, Japanese middleweight **Seiji Takechi** committed suicide by hanging himself in Tokyo. Takechi, 24, left no indication as to why he took his own life.

Gamache: Hefty settlement coming

THE PUNCHLINES

"Pat's a tough Irishman. But I know he likes his beer."

—Vinny Paz, on why he went to Pat Lawlor's body to score a stoppage in their July fight

"Then I'm moving to Germany!"

—Bones Adams, after being told that, with German TV money added in, Wladimir Klitschko may have earned more for his fight with Charles Shufford than Adams did against Paulie Ayala

AL KRATZER'S VIEW

The RING
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RATINGS ANALYSIS

POUND-FOR-POUND

1. SHANE MOSLEY
   Welterweight
2. FELIX TRINIDAD
   Middleweight
3. ROY JONES
   Light Heavyweight
4. MARCO ANTONIO BARRERA
   Featherweight
5. FLOYD MAYWEATHER
   Junior Lightweight
6. OSCAR DE LA HOYA
   Junior Middleweight
7. BERNARD HOPKINS
   Middleweight
8. NASEEM HAMED
   Featherweight
9. RICARDO LOPEZ
   Junior Flyweight
10. ERIK MORALES
    Featherweight

(For the period ended September 10, 2001)

HEAVYWEIGHTS: Chris Byrd soars from 10th to fifth on the strength of his lopsided decision over David Tua, who tumbles from seventh to 10th. John Ruiz (fifth last issue) and Kirk Johnson (formerly sixth) move down to sixth and seventh, respectively, to accommodate Byrd's advancement.

CRUISERWEIGHTS: Previously unranked O'Neil Bell debuts at number six, thanks to his TKO of Arthur Williams (sixth last issue), who exits. James Toney (seventh last issue) is also gone, due to the fact that he's now fighting at heavyweight. Aboard at number 10 is undefeated Wayne Braithwaite.

LIGHT HEAVYWEIGHTS: No changes.

SUPER MIDDLEWEIGHTS: Sven Ottke (second last issue) has regained the number-one spot from Joe Calzaghe (first last issue) due to his one-sided win over James Butler, who slides from ninth to 10th. Butler's demotion allows Mads Larsen to advance from 10th to ninth.

MIDDLEWEIGHTS: No changes.

JUNIOR MIDDLEWEIGHTS: No changes.

WELTERWEIGHTS: Shannan Taylor (eighth last issue) departs because of his kayo loss to Julian Holland. Antonio Margarito (ninth last issue) and Manuel Gomez (previously 10th) both move up one position each, thanks to Taylor's departure. The void at the 10th spot is filled by Cory Spinks.

JUNIOR WELTERWEIGHTS: Ben Tackie's impressive win over Ray Oliveira earns him the ninth spot, which was previously occupied by Terronn Millett.

LIGHTWEIGHTS: Juan Lazcano (10th last issue) moves up to ninth after icing Julio Alvarez, while Julio Diaz enters at number 10. Takanori Hatakeyama (ninth last issue) exits to make room for Diaz.

JUNIOR LIGHTWEIGHTS: Tontcho Tontchev (10th last issue) departs due to his kayo loss to unranked Luis Lizarraga, which creates a spot for Phillip Ndou, who replaces Tontchev at 10th.

FEATHERWEIGHTS: No changes.

JUNIOR FEATHERWEIGHTS: No changes.

BANTAMWEIGHTS: Jorge Lacierva (sixth last issue) is gone after being decisioned by Heriberto Ruiz, who is now aboard at number seven. Also departing is Hugo Dianzo (formerly ninth) as a result of his points loss to Cruz Carbajal. Mauricio Martinez (seventh last issue) advances to sixth, and Toshiaka Nishioka debuts at 10th on the strength of his 12-round draw with second-ranked Veerapol Sahaprom.

JUNIOR BANTAMWEIGHTS: No changes.

FLYWEIGHTS: Both Alejandro and Fernando Montiel (seventh and eighth, respectively, last issue) jump up one spot after scoring victories. Saen Sor Ploenchit slips from sixth to eighth due to his lack of activity against top opposition.

JUNIOR FLYWEIGHTS: Will Grigsby (seventh last issue) exits because hasn't fought in more than a year. His departure pushes up Jorge Arce (eighth last issue), Hidenobu Honda (ninth last issue), and Nelson Dieppa (10th last issue) one place each. Thailand's Fahlan Sakkreerin fills out the division at number 10.

STRAWWEIGHTS: Yutaka Niida (10th last issue) leaps to the number-one position due his victory over Chana Porpaoin (first last issue) to win the WBA belt. Porpaoin falls to fourth.

POUND-FOR-POUND: Marco Antonio Barrera's continued brilliance versus Enrique Sanchez and Floyd Mayweather's mediocre performance against Carlos Hernandez (coupled with his withdrawal from his bout with Jesus Chavez) has prompted a reshuffling among the third through fifth positions. Roy Jones moves from fourth to third (pretty much through default), Barrera advances from fifth to fourth, and Mayweather falls from third to fifth. ■

THE RING RATINGS

For Period Ended September 10, 2001

PHOTO BY SUMIO YAMADA

Celes Kobayashi hung on to the WBA 115-pound belt and his number two ranking by outpointing Jesus Rojas

How Our Ratings Are Compiled

In each division, fighters are ranked according to their abilities and accomplishments.

Being champion does not necessarily mean a fighter will be rated at the top of his weight class.

These ratings reflect how the best fighters in the world rate against one another.

Ratings By The Editors

Records By Fight Fax Inc.

HEAVYWEIGHTS
Weight Unlimited

1. **HASIM RAHMAN** Baltimore, MD *35-2 (WBC/IBF Champ)*
2. **LENNOX LEWIS** England *38-2-1*
3. **WLADIMIR KLITSCHKO** Ukraine *37-1*
4. **MIKE TYSON** Catskill, NY *48-3*
5. **CHRIS BYRD** Flint, MI *34-2*
6. **JOHN RUIZ** Chelsea, MA *37-4 (WBA Champ)*
7. **KIRK JOHNSON** Canada *32-0-1*
8. **EVANDER HOLYFIELD** Fairburn, GA *37-5-1*
9. **LANCE WHITAKER** Mission Hills, CA *23-1*
10. **DAVID TUA** New Zealand *38-3*

JR. MIDDLEWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 154 pounds

1. **OSCAR DE LA HOYA** Whittier, CA *34-2 (WBC Champ)*
2. **FERNANDO VARGAS** Oxnard, CA *21-1*
3. **WINKY WRIGHT** St. Petersburg, FL *41-3*
4. **FRANCISCO CASTILLEJO** Spain *51-5*
5. **BRONCO McKART** Monroe, MI *44-3*
6. **YORY BOY CAMPAS** Mexico *78-4*
7. **ALEX BUNEMA** Dallas, TX *19-2-1*
8. **J.C. CANDELO** Denver, CO *23-3-3*
9. **SHIBATA FLORES** Mexico *42-8*
10. **ROMAN KARMAZIN** Russia *28-0-1*

FEATHERWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 126 pounds

1. **MARCO ANTONIO BARRERA** Mexico *54-3*
2. **NASEEM HAMED** England *35-1*
3. **ERIK MORALES** Mexico *41-0 (WBC Champ)*
4. **JOHNNY TAPIA** Albuquerque, NM *50-2-2*
5. **DERRICK GAINER** Pensacola, FL *38-5 (WBA Champ)*
6. **FRANKIE TOLEDO** Paterson, NJ *40-5-1 (IBF Champ)*
7. **MBULELO BOTILE** South Africa *27-2*
8. **WILLIAM ABELYAN** Las Vegas, NV *17-4-1*
9. **GUTY ESPADAS** Mexico *34-4*
10. **JUAN MANUEL MARQUEZ** Mexico *36-2*

JR. FEATHERWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 122 pounds

1. **BONES ADAMS** Henderson, KY *41-4-3*
2. **PAULIE AYALA** Ft. Worth, TX *33-1*
3. **MANNY PACQUAIO** Philippines *33-2 (IBF Champ)*
4. **WILLIE JORRIN** Sacramento, CA *28-0 (WBC Champ)*
5. **LEHLO LEDWABA** South Africa *33-2-1*
6. **ENRIQUE SANCHEZ** Mexico *28-2-2*
7. **OSCAR LARIOS** Mexico *40-3-1*
8. **MICHAEL BRODIE** England *30-1*
9. **JOSE LUIS VALBUENA** Venezuela *19-2-1*
10. **DANNY ROMERO** Albuquerque, NM *41-3-1*

BANTAMWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 118 pounds

1. **TIM AUSTIN** Cincinnati, OH *23-0-1 (IBF Champ)*
2. **VEERAPOL SAHAPROM** Thailand *31-1-1 (WBC Champ)*
3. **ADAN VARGAS** Mexico *36-2-1*
4. **MARK JOHNSON** Washington, D.C. *40-1*
5. **JOHNNY BREDAHL** Denmark *50-2*
6. **MAURICIO MARTINEZ** Panama *19-3-1*
7. **HERIBERTO RUIZ** Mexico *22-1-1*
8. **GENARO GARCIA** Mexico *24-3*
9. **JORGE ELIECER JULIO** Colombia *43-3*
10. **TOSHIAKI NISHIOKA** Japan *22-3-2*

CRUISERWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 190 pounds

1. **JUAN CARLOS GOMEZ**
   Germany *33-0 (WBC Champ)*
2. **VASSILIY JIROV**
   Kazakhstan *30-0 (IBF Champ)*
3. **VIRGIL HILL**
   Bismarck, ND *47-3 (WBA Champ)*
4. **JOHNNY NELSON**
   England *40-12-1*
5. **CARL THOMPSON**
   England *28-5*
6. **O'NEIL BELL**
   Atlanta, GA *17-1*
7. **MARCELO DOMINGUEZ**
   Argentina *32-4-1*
8. **FABRICE TIOZZO**
   France *42-2*
9. **LOUIS AZILLE**
   Jersey City, NJ *16-0-2*
10. **WAYNE BRAITHWAITE**
    Guyana *16-0*

LIGHT HEAVYWEIGHTS
Weight limit: 175 pounds

1. **ROY JONES**
   Pensacola, FL *45-1 (WBC/WBA/IBF Champ)*
2. **DARIUSZ MICHALCZEWSKI**
   Germany *44-0*
3. **ERIC HARDING**
   Philadephia, PA *20-1-1*
4. **REGGIE JOHNSON**
   Houston, TX *42-6-1*
5. **MONTELL GRIFFIN**
   Chicago, IL *41-3*
6. **ANTONIO TARVER**
   Orlando, FL *18-1*
7. **JULIO GONZALEZ**
   Huntington Beach, CA *27-1*
8. **BRUNO GIRARD**
   France *39-2-2*
9. **LOU DEL VALLE**
   Bronx, NY *31-2-1*
10. **CHRIS JOHNSON**
    Canada *26-3-1*

SUPER MIDDLEWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 168 pounds

1. **SVEN OTTKE**
   Germany *24-0 (IBF Champ)*
2. **JOE CALZAGHE**
   Wales *31-0*
3. **BYRON MITCHELL**
   Ozark, AL *23-1-1 (WBA Champ)*
4. **ANTWUN ECHOLS**
   Davenport, IA *25-4-1*
5. **ERIC LUCAS**
   Canada *33-4-3 (WBC Champ)*
6. **CHARLES BREWER**
   Philadelphia, PA *36-8*
7. **THOMAS TATE**
   Houston, TX *40-6*
8. **DINGAAN THOBELA**
   South Africa *40-8-2*
9. **MADS LARSEN**
   Denmark *37-1*
10. **JAMES BUTLER**
    Bronx, NY *18-2*

MIDDLEWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 160 pounds

1. **BERNARD HOPKINS**
   Philadelphia, PA *39-2-1 (IBF/WBC Champ)*
2. **FELIX TRINIDAD**
   Puerto Rico *40-0 (WBA Champ)*
3. **WILLIAM JOPPY**
   Washington, D.C. *32-2-1*
4. **ARMAND KRAJNC**
   Sweden *25-0*
5. **HARRY SIMON**
   Namibia *22-0*
6. **KEITH HOLMES**
   Washington, D.C. *35-3*
7. **HOWARD EASTMAN**
   England *32-0*
8. **HASSINE CHERIFI**
   France *32-5-1*
9. **CARL DANIELS**
   St. Louis, MO *47-3-1*
10. **ANTONIO PERUGINO**
    Italy *17-0*

WELTERWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 147 pounds

1. **SHANE MOSLEY**
   Pomona, CA *38-0 (WBC Champ)*
2. **ANDREW LEWIS**
   Guyana *21-0-1 (WBA Champ)*
3. **VERNON FORREST**
   Atlanta, GA *33-0 (IBF Champ)*
4. **THOMAS DAMGAARD**
   Denmark *25-0*
5. **DANIEL SANTOS**
   Puerto Rico *24-2-1*
6. **JAMES PAGE**
   Pittsburg, CA *25-4*
7. **RAFAEL PINEDA**
   Colombia *34-3*
8. **ANTONIO MARGARITO**
   Mexico *25-3*
9. **MANUEL GOMEZ**
   Mexico *21-10*
10. **CORY SPINKS**
    St. Louis, MO *28-1*

JR. WELTERWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 140 pounds

1. **KOSTYA TSZYU**
   Australia *27-1-1 (WBA/WBC Champ)*
2. **ZAB JUDAH**
   Brooklyn, NY *27-0 (IBF Champ)*
3. **SHARMBA MITCHELL**
   Washington, D.C. *47-3*
4. **ANTONIO DIAZ**
   Coachella, CA *36-3*
5. **DeMARCUS CORLEY**
   Washington, D.C. *26-1-1*
6. **ENER JULIO**
   Colombia *21-3*
7. **RANDALL BAILEY**
   Miami, FL *24-1*
8. **MICKY WARD**
   Lowell, MA *37-10*
9. **BEN TACKIE**
   Ghana *23-2*
10. **OKTAY URKAL**
    Germany *28-1*

LIGHTWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 135 pounds

1. **JOSE LUIS CASTILLO**
   Mexico *44-4-1 (WBC Champ)*
2. **STEVE JOHNSTON**
   Denver, CO *32-2-1*
3. **PAUL SPADAFORA**
   Pittsburgh, PA *34-0 (IBF Champ)*
4. **JULIEN LORCY**
   France *49-2-2 (WBA Champ)*
5. **ANGEL MANFREDY**
   Gary, IN *38-5-1*
6. **ARTUR GRIGORIAN**
   Uzbekistan *33-0*
7. **COLIN DUNNE**
   England *34-1*
8. **JESSE JAMES LEIJA**
   San Antonio, TX *42-5-2*
9. **JUAN LAZCANO**
   El Paso, TX *28-2-1*
10. **JULIO DIAZ**
    Coachella, CA *23-0*

JR. LIGHTWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 130 pounds

1. **FLOYD MAYWEATHER**
   Grand Rapids, MI *26-0 (WBC Champ)*
2. **JOEL CASAMAYOR**
   Miami, FL *25-0 (WBA Champ)*
3. **ACELINO FREITAS**
   Brazil *29-0*
4. **JESUS CHAVEZ**
   Mexico *35-1*
5. **STEVE FORBES**
   Las Vegas, NV *19-1 (IBF Champ)*
6. **JONGKWON BAEK**
   South Korea *22-1-1*
7. **LAKVA SIM**
   Mongolia *14-2-1*
8. **JOHN BROWN**
   Atlantic City, NJ *23-8*
9. **ALEJANDRO GONZALEZ**
   Mexico *46-4-1*
10. **PHILLIP NDOU**
    South Africa *24-1*

JR. BANTAMWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 115 pounds

1. **MASAMORI TOKUYAMA**
   North Korea *24-2-1 (WBC Champ)*
2. **CELES KOBAYASHI**
   Japan *24-4-3 (WBA Champ)*
3. **FELIX MACHADO**
   Venezuela *21-3-1 (IBF Champ)*
4. **GERRY PENALOSA**
   Philippines *43-3-2*
5. **SAMSON TOYOTA-THAILAND**
   Thailand *40-0*
6. **JESUS ROJAS**
   Venezuela *34-9-3*
7. **PEDRO ALCAZAR**
   Panama *21-1-1*
8. **IN JOO CHO**
   South Korea *18-2*
9. **MAURICIO PASTRANA**
   Colombia *26-3*
10. **MARTIN CASTILLO**
    Mexico *20-0*

FLYWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 112 pounds

1. **ERIC MOREL**
   Madison, WI *30-0 (WBA Champ)*
2. **PONGSAKLEK SINGWANGCHA**
   Thailand *40-2 (WBC Champ)*
3. **IRENE PACHECO**
   Colombia *25-0 (IBF Champ)*
4. **HAWK MAKEPULA**
   South Africa *19-1*
5. **MEDGOEN TOYOTA-THAILAND**
   Thailand *24-1*
6. **ALEJANDRO MONTIEL**
   Mexico *47-3*
7. **FERNANDO MONTIEL**
   Mexico *23-0-1*
8. **SAEN SOR PLOENCHIT**
   Thailand *39-1*
9. **MALCOLM TUNACAO**
   Philippines *11-1-2*
10. **ALEXANDER MUNOZ**
    Venezuela *16-0*

JR. FLYWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 108 pounds

1. **RICARDO LOPEZ**
   Mexico *49-0-1 (IBF Champ)*
2. **YOSAM CHOI**
   South Korea *23-1 (WBC Champ)*
3. **PICHIT C. SIRIWAT**
   Thailand *23-1*
4. **ROSENDO ALVAREZ**
   Nicaragua *29-2-1 (WBA Champ)*
5. **BEBIS MENDOZA**
   Colombia *26-1*
6. **ZOLANI PETELO**
   South Africa *17-2-2*
7. **JORGE ARCE**
   Mexico *26-3-1*
8. **HIDENOBU HONDA**
   Japan *23-1*
9. **NELSON DIEPPA**
   Puerto Rico *20-2-1*
10. **FAHLAN SAKKREERIN**
    Thailand *40-2-2*

STRAWWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 105 pounds

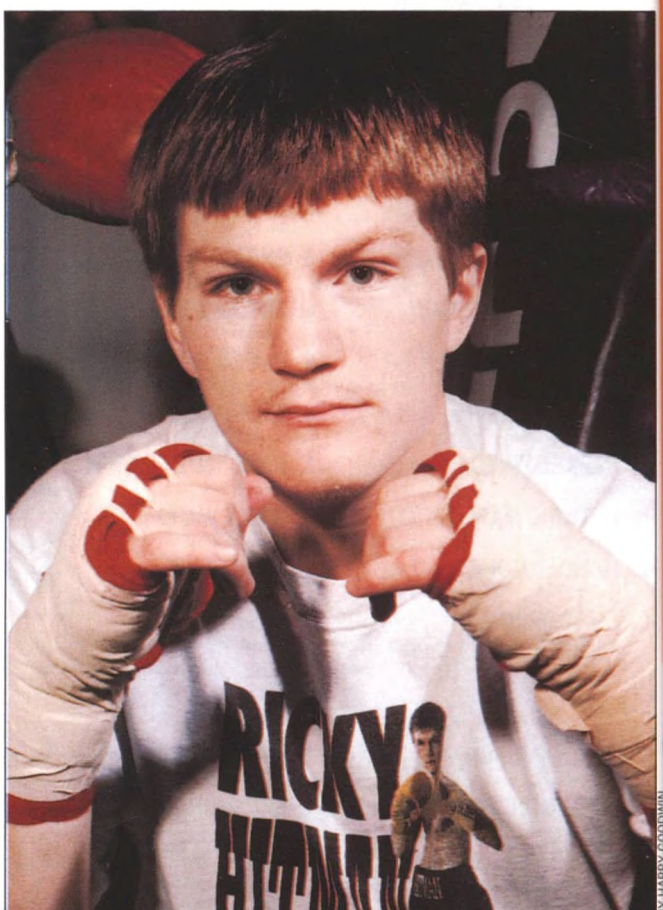
1. **YUTAKA NIIDA**
   Japan *14-0-3 (WBA Champ)*
2. **JOSE AGUIRRE**
   Mexico *25-1-1 (WBC Champ)*
3. **ROBERTO LEYVA**
   Mexico *18-0 (IBF Champ)*
4. **CHANA PORPAOIN**
   Thailand *44-2-2*
5. **KEITARO HOSHINO**
   Japan *21-7*
6. **JOMA GAMBOA**
   Philippines *31-6-1*
7. **NOEL ARAMBULET**
   Venezuela *13-2-1*
8. **WANDEE SINGWANGCHA**
   Thailand *28-4*
9. **KERMIN GUARDIA**
   Colombia *33-2*
10. **DANIEL REYES**
    Colombia *24-1*

NEW FACES

RICKY HATTON

Junior Welterweight

By Joe Santoliquito



There are mild-mannered people in this world who don their suit and ties, grab their briefcase, kiss the wife, and send the kids off to school every day. Then, once they get behind the steering wheel of a car, they turn into maniacs. Anyone and anything that hinders them getting from Point A to Point B is either flattened or brutally run aside. A psychologist somewhere coined the term "Road Rage" to describe the affliction that comes over such people.

Ricky Hatton suffers from the same malady, only his occurs every time he puts on a pair of boxing gloves and ducks between the ropes. Call it "Ring Rage."

Hatton doesn't know where it comes from. He's from a good family, had a trauma-free upbringing, and has always been well-mannered outside the ropes. It's inside the ring that Hatton's Hyde arises. Using this furious style, the junior welterweight from Manchester, England, has built an impressive 24-0 (19) record. And if he continues at his current pace, "The Hitman" could very well get a title shot within the next year.

It's hard to imagine Hatton as a terror by his serene appearance. The 5'7" Englishman recently turned 22, yet just started shaving. His boyish looks, which are more prep school than predator, have worked to his advantage. Perhaps the best example come from his amateur days when the Irish National team came to England for a tournament.

At the time, Hatton was a 15-year-old wrecking machine, knocking out everyone he faced. The Irish trainer had heard about him, and came poking around the locker room area to see what this young demolition expert

(Continued on page 90)

PRO RECORD

1997		
Sept. 11	Colin McAuley, Widnes, England	KO 1
Dec. 19	Robert Alvarez, New York City	W 4
1998		
Jan. 17	David Thompson, Bristol, England	KO 1
March 27	Paul Salmon, Telford, England	KO 1
April 18	Karl Taylor, Manchester, England	KO 1
May 30	Mark Ramsey, Bristol	W 6
July 18	Anthony Campbell, Sheffield, England	W 6
Sept: 19	Pascal Montulet, Oberhausen, Germany	KO 2
Oct. 31	Kevin Carter, Atlantic City	KO 1
Dec. 19	Paul Denton, Liverpool, England	KO 6
1999		
Feb. 27	Tommy Peacock, Oldham, England	KO 2
April 3	Brian Coleman, London	KO 2
May 29	Dillon Carew, Halifax, England	KO 5
July 17	Mark Ramsey, Doncaster, England	W 6
Oct. 9	Bernard Paul, Manchester	KO 4
Dec. 11	Mark Winters, Liverpool	KO 4
2000		
Jan. 29	Leoncio Garces, Manchester	KO 3
March 25	Pedro Alonso Teran, Liverpool	KO 4
May 16	Ambioris Figuereo, Warrington, England	KO 4
June 10	Gilbert Quiros, Detroit	KO 2
Sept. 23	Giuseppe Lauri, Bethnal Green, England	KO 5
Oct. 21	Jonathan Thaxton, London	W 12
2001		
March 26	Tony Pep, Wembley, England	KO 4
July 7	Jason Rowland, Manchester	KO 4

FIGHTS	WON	LOST	DRAW	KOs
24	24	0	0	19

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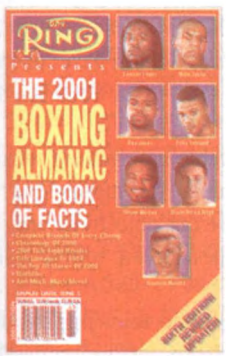

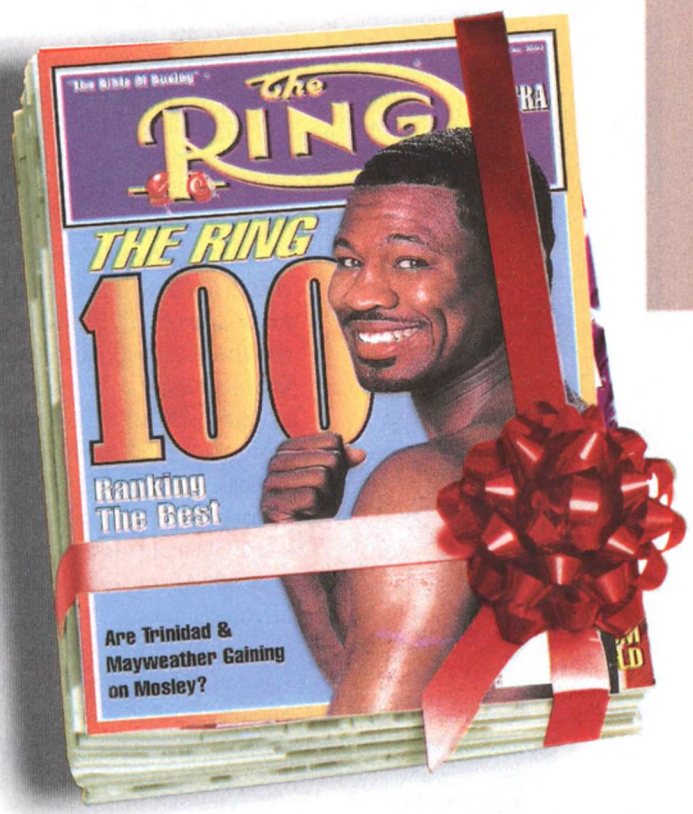

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PHOTO BY HARRY GOODWIN

RYAN OUT LOUD

By Jeff Ryan

MY ROOTS ARE SHOWING

The freedom to root—to leap to your feet in a fist-pumping frenzy, wave a sign, or shout yourself hoarse while pulling for one guy to land his left hook and the other guy to land in the timekeeper's lap—is something all you fistic diehards should never take for granted. Sure, it might be *your* God-given right, but some of us children of a lesser god don't have the luxury of cheering heroes, jeering zeroes, or leading a section of the cheap seats in an obscene chant when we don't like what the scorecards have to say.

You see, rooting from the press section is about as socially acceptable as breaking wind in church or flossing your teeth at the dinner table. Heck, we media types aren't even supposed to root for or against anyone in the privacy of our own living rooms, lest we lose our objectivity and perspective. Naturally, *this* upstanding journalist has never had any problem adhering to that policy. Um, none at all.

For instance, on that memorable night when the sound of whooping and rejoicing could be heard throughout my apartment building as Buster Douglas, a 42-1 underdog whose mother had just passed away, knocked out Mike Tyson, an arrogant multi-millionaire with a thug past, I was so dispassionate that I might as well have been watching a test of the Emergency Broadcast System or a tape of an old Gerald Ford speech. More recently, when Hasim Rahman stretched Lennox Lewis in South Africa with a right hand that was launched from North Africa, I didn't summon even a hiccup, let alone a roar of approval.

You'll never catch me giving somebody a standing ovation. It's just not appropriate. (Thousands of people may be on their feet, but I couldn't be more glued to my seat if Butterbean was sitting on my lap.) Nor will you hear me refer to one of my articles as a "feel-good story." To a boxing writer, there is no such thing. We can't feel good about someone we're supposed to be detached from, right?

PHOTO BY CHRIS FARINA

Ryan's rooting for Ruiz to give Holyfield one more whipping

For those of us who make our livings banging on a laptop, these are simply the rules of the game, and we accept them. Of course, if I was ever lucky enough to be granted a temporary pardon from this emotional prison called objectivity, if I was allowed to unfurl a bed sheet banner expressing my loyalties and paint my face the col-

ors of my favorite fighters' robes and trunks, there would be an awful lot of rooting to get out of my system. I'd root, root, root, not for the home team, but for ...

•John Ruiz to knock Evander Holyfield flatter than Gwyneth Paltrow's chest when they meet for a third time. I gave "The Surreal Deal" the benefit of the doubt, and then some, when he turned in two unspectacular performances against Lennox Lewis and moved as though wearing a full-body cast in the first outing with Ruiz. But the Ruiz rematch confirmed that the 39-year-old Holyfield is just a remnant of a once-legendary warrior.

Stubbornness is a great quality in a champion when he refuses to lose or refuses to take a backward step. But it's a terrible quality when it keeps him hanging on long after he's effective, entertaining, and able to fully protect himself. Ruiz may be "The Quiet Man," but it's Holyfield who should go quietly into that good night. And if he doesn't go quietly, then send him out with a loud crash. Just get rid of him.

•Paulie Ayala to get fleeced worse than a tourist taken for a $300 ride by a slimy New York cabbie. You can make the case that Ayala has a knack for impressing the judges, and that he eked out his two give-and-take battles with Johnny Tapia and close fights against Hugo Dianzo and Bones Adams. You can just as easily make the case that Ayala lost all four bouts and that he must have cut some kind of deal with the devil the day he turned pro.

In the real world, what goes around comes around. In boxing, what goes around often just keeps going around and around and around. Such as nutty decisions that keep benefiting the same undeserving guy.

•Roy Jones, Oscar De La Hoya, Joe Calzaghe, Byron Mitchell, or *anybody* to topple Felix Trinidad. Nothing personal against the Puerto Rican demolition expert. His wins over David Reid, Fernando Vargas, and William Joppy were extremely impressive. And, for those of us power lovers, the sight of Trinidad cutting loose with a right cross is more fun than Barry Bonds turning on a fastball. But it's hard to root for a guy whose fans are such frontrunners.

PHOTO BY CHRIS FARINA

How many fights are left on Paulie's contract with the devil?

I'm not talking about the Trinidad diehards who have followed him since he first wore a welterweight crown. I'm talking about the countless fair-weather fans who suddenly materialized, Puerto Rican flags in hand and "El Campeon" T-shirts on their backs following the Vargas and Joppy bouts. A year or two ago, a lot of these people didn't know Trinidad from Tobago. They couldn't tell "Tito" from Jermaine. Now so many of them are hopping aboard the bandwagon that its back fender is scraping the ground.

•Chris Byrd to lose when he gets that shot at the heavyweight title. Heavyweight kings are supposed to be men of clout, and Mr. Slappy Fists doesn't measure up. The problem isn't just that Byrd doesn't hit as hard as Sonny Liston. Few guys do. It's that Byrd doesn't hit as hard as *Geraldine* Liston.

•Tyson to falter when he gets *his* opportunity to capture the belt. A convicted rapist who bit a chunk out of one opponent's ear and tried to break the arm of a second rival doesn't deserve yet another title reign and the, oh, $100-million that would go with it.

•Roy Jones to retire. If one of the all-time greats at 175 pounds is so bored these days that he can't even kayo these outclassed challengers he's being served, and if he doesn't want to test himself at heavyweight, then maybe he should embark on a singing career. (As long as he doesn't charge us 40 bucks for his concerts on pay-per-view, that is.)

•Any media member who calls me complaining about something I wrote about them to get food poisoning from the press room cuisine. Really bad food poisoning. The kind that makes Linda Blair's pea-soup spewing scene in *The Exorcist* look like a case of mild indigestion. I can sometimes understand when a fighter or manager takes issue with something in my column, but fellow journalists pissing and whining really ticks me off.

These guys, after all, know what this job is like and how annoying it is to have to listen to someone griping that he wasn't painted in absolutely glowing terms. Actually, one journalist complained that I was making him sound too smart when I wrote about him. As a result, he said, I was implying that he was condescending. And the guy was dead serious.

Well, to make amends, I promise to make the guy sound like a dope from now on. Maybe that will make him happy. ■

DIGGING DEEP

By Ivan Goldman

WHY BYRD'S A BORE

Chris Byrd is about as exciting as a turnip. Laying out cash to see him fight is like paying to watch a kettle of water that never comes to a boil. If he beat a thousand David Tuas, Byrd still couldn't sell tickets.

When they try to explain just why Byrd is so terribly boring, commentators tend to focus on his defense-first strategy and ineffective punching. But to me the worst part is watching him paw with that lead right hand of his for an entire fight—waving it over and over in the guy's face like a subpoena. I fail to see the entertainment value. It's like 12 three-minute rounds of someone scraping his fingernails across a chalkboard.

I know there are experts out there who say we should appreciate Byrd for his prowess. I do. I also appreciate the talent it takes to knit a sweater. But that doesn't mean I want to watch the procedure. Byrd induces a horrifying level of tedium. After just three or four rounds, he can make the most ardent fight fan flee to the Golf Channel.

Think of the greatest heavyweight fights you've ever seen. Thrilla in Manila, Tyson vs. Douglas, you name it. Now try to imagine Byrd in that fight. You can't. Because his undeviating strategy is to make it boring. His fights are like conversations that always sink to the level of their dullest participant.

After watching perhaps 100 rounds of Byrd, I've come to view the time as an intermittent jail sentence. The only part that stands out was when dingbat Ike Ibeabuchi, in a moment of almost supernatural clarity and justice, cornered him on the ropes and flattened him. All the rest has been the gray, despairing canvas of an Ingmar Bergman film.

And now that he's won the right to fight the winner of Hasim Rahman vs. Lennox Lewis II, this snore-mongering nuisance, this master of anti-drama must be taken seriously. Yes, Byrd's actually on the threshold of the real heavyweight championship. Responsible boxing writers will have to stifle any objections and analyze his fights in detail.

Fortunately for me, I'm not a responsible boxing writer. Readers seeking anybody like that will have to read other sections of this magazine. They are written by people who can still take it. Not me. I've had it. I've been broken. I'll give up my name, rank, serial number, the password, all our tank and artillery positions, and which sector we plan to attack Thursday. Just as long as I don't have to watch any more Byrd.

One more round will reduce me to a blubbering mass of incoherence. I know some readers think I already am a blubbering mass of incoherence. But trust me, Byrd can make it worse.

PHOTO BY CHRIS FARINA

Goldman can't wait to see more of this

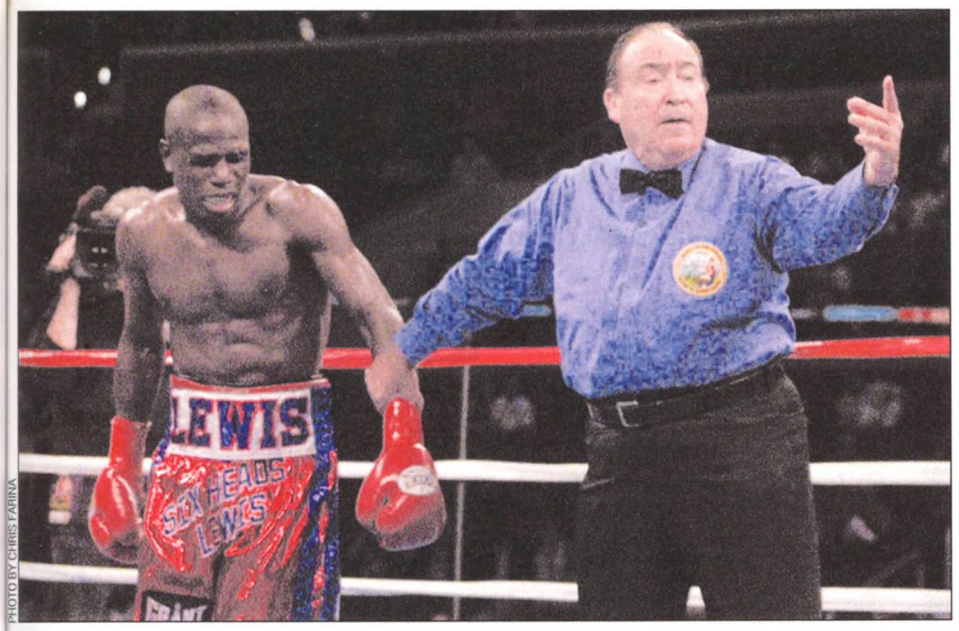


PHOTO BY CHRIS FARINA

Sulaiman is upset at Denkin for working Lewis-Mayorga fight

WBC GODFATHER: California referee Marty Denkin says he's in trouble with Jose Sulaiman's WBC. Mexico-based Sulaiman didn't want him to referee the WBA title fight between welterweights Andrew "Six Heads" Lewis and Ricardo Mayorga in Los Angeles. The bout ended in a no-contest when Lewis was cut by an accidental headbutt early in the second round.

Sulaiman says referees who officiate fights for rival alphabet bandits can't work WBC fights, although they are technically allowed to referee any fight within their own state.

"It's happened before," Denkin told me. "Sulaiman sat me down for six months when I did an IBO fight in Chile. Other organizations do the same thing, but they don't have a rule. Sulaiman's so stupid he has an actual rule."

Denkin, who said he will retire from refereeing within the next couple of years, wants to officiate title fights while he's still capable of doing them properly. Ex-cop Denkin is clearly fed up with walking the tightrope of loyalty demanded by an offshore alphabet gang that makes up rules on the fly.

He also complained that Sulaiman doesn't enforce his rules against everybody. To paraphrase author George Orwell, all WBC officials are equal, but some are more equal than others.

Denkin said officials have to fork over dues of $150 a year just to be considered for WBC assignments. They are also heavily pressured to attend the annual WBC conventions—at their own expense.

"This is what I get after 25 years of loyalty to the WBC," Denkin said. "All of a sudden he says you no longer are going to work for the WBC. He's sending me a message because I'm open and willing to talk. But I'm not such a renegade. I just believe that if managers, fighters, and promoters can work with different organizations, why can't officials? If we're good, if we can give safety to fighters, we're needed out there. So why not let us work?"

Good question. The answer is that Sulaiman, who answers to no one but himself, has apparently confused himself with fictitious Godfather Vito Corleone. Maybe he just wants Denkin to kiss his hand.

SMITTEN: Don King's publicity machine sent out a press release noting that King was "smitten by the Chinese people and its culture." The anonymous mercenary scribe who had to write that dreck has my sympathy. He or she clearly snapped under the pressure of trying to build up enthusiasm for yet another match between the washed-up Evander Holyfield and his faithful, plodding companion John Ruiz.

Anyway, King tends to get smitten everywhere he promotes a card. I recall his praising an outdoor venue set up behind an Indian casino in the California desert. As he described what a privilege it was to be there, sand flies circled his face in three-figure heat. You wouldn't want King as a travel agent.

TOO MUCH BEAN?: After hometowner Billy Zumbrun took a majority decision over Butterbean in Wendover, Utah, some pesky critics suggested that the Bean's 373 pounds of unsupervised lard may have hampered his style. Had Butterbean pulled into a highway weighing station in that condition, someone would have had to call over a supervisor. Perhaps the Bean's nutritionist was on vacation at some trailer park.

But there's a more likely cause for the defeat: Nobody over at Top Rank, which promotes Butterbean's act, remembered to brief the officials on the script.

FINAL WORD: Ex-junior welter contender Hector Lopez, no stranger to the criminal justice system, was sentenced to 9½ years in California for assaulting his wife in a restaurant. ■

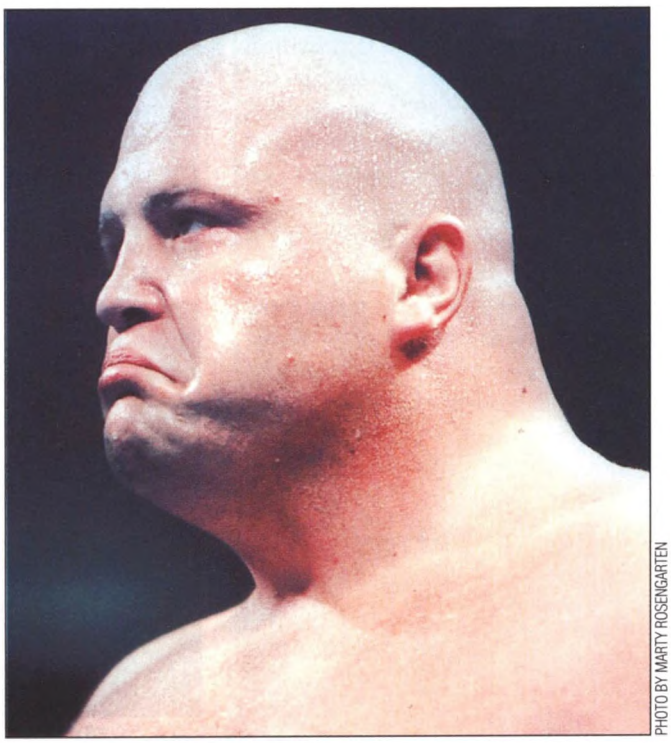


PHOTO BY MARTY ROSENGARTEN

Another Bean bummer

BEING THERE

LOS ANGELES BOXING AND FITNESS CLUB

PHOTOS BY JAN SANDERS

Plenty of heavybags at the 33,000 square foot gym

IF YOU GO

Location: 333 W. Washington Blvd., Los Angeles, CA 90015; phone: 213-748-1957

Directions: From the Harbor Freeway (Interstate 110), go east at Adams Avenue exit, just south of downtown. Turn north on Grand Avenue, then west on Washington for one block. Better yet, take the Blue Line light rail trolley to the Grand Avenue Station in front of the gym.

Membership: $60 to join, then $30 monthly for all facilities. Beginners don't need to hire a trainer because classes are thrown in with membership.

Who to look out for: Just about every active West Coast fighter you ever heard of trains here or has trained here. The regular roster these days includes Jose and Carlos Navarro and Jorge Paez. Out of town drop-ins too numerous to name include even seldom-seen German light heavyweight Dariusz Michalczewski. Marco Antonio Barrera is a semi-regular.

Advice to greenhorns: The snazzy, black, $25 poplin jackets with the gym logo are a steal. There are plenty of 25 cents-an-hour parking meters if the lot is full, so bring quarters. Bring your own speedbag. The gym used to supply them, but like Amelia Earhart, Jimmy Hoffa, Chandra Levy, and socks in the laundry, they all disappeared.

Snacks and souvenirs are available at a reasonable price

By Ivan Goldman

If you want to work out in downtown L.A., it's easy to find a yuppie gym that offers some sort of boxing along with its gleaming weight machines, treadmills, etc., plus towel service, for $150 or so a month.

Or you can travel a couple miles south of the financial district, just across the Santa Monica Freeway overpass, to the L.A. Boxing Club. Here you'll get the same stuff, minus the towels, for $30 a month.

You'll find males and females of every conceivable race who are having a much better time. There's a business-like but amiable buzz all around you. You'll learn way more about boxing and you won't have to listen to selfish bores crying over dead Internet companies or bragging about stock deals. There's no designer coffee, but there are reasonably priced snacks and a pool table downstairs.

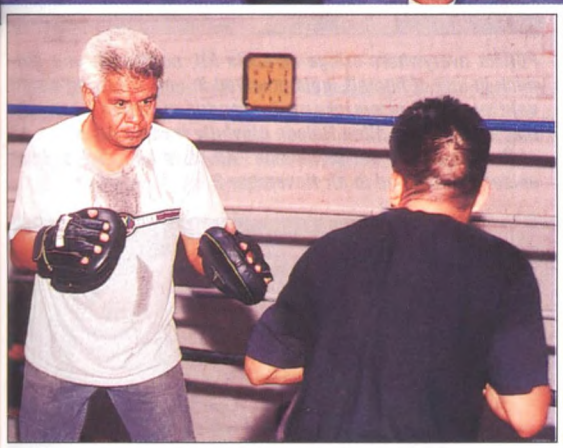
Also, your dues will help subsidize neighborhood kids, most of whom are Hispanic. That's because Richard Allen, the principal owner, who is African-American, cares about keeping them off the streets and giving their lives direction and discipline. But everybody else has to pay full price. That includes ordinary deadbeats as well as world champions who think they shouldn't have to cough up dinero like mere mortals.

Even if you've seen a lot of boxing gyms, this will probably be the biggest one you ever saw—33,000 square feet. It's easy to get lost. There are four rings.

Gym regulars include Jo Jo Wyman, trainer/gym manager Victor Hernandez, Wendy Rodriguez, and Francisco Bueno

N THE L.A. BOXING CLUB

One of the four rings at the spacious L.A. Boxing Club



Trainer Jorge Meija works the pads with one of his pupils

Nancy Hernandez shows a client how to work the computerized treadmill

Allen started the gym in 1995 or '96. It's uncertain because no one was keeping score. The building was industrial space that had been abandoned 10 years earlier. This is the gym where Shane Mosley, Zack Padilla, Genaro Hernandez, and Hector Lopez sparred day after day, preparing each other for other fighters and giving spectators a better show than they'd see for $100 in Las Vegas. It's also served as a set for gym scenes in plenty of films. It's the gym where Lucia Rijker, in a bold attempt to set up a grudge match, walked straight up to Christy Martin and thumped her with a bare-handed punch.

"So many gyms treat boxers like animals," Allen said. "No showers, equipment in disrepair. We feel all athletes today have nice facilities except boxers, and we wanted to change that, give them decent rings and nice, clean showers."

But don't try to con Allen with a story about why you can't pay him this month.

"You don't go to McDonald's and ask for credit," Allen explained. "You don't pull into a Union 76 gas station and tell them you'll pay them after your next fight. And they have more money than I do."

And pros should never, ever tell him they'll pay up after their next fight.

"After the fight," he said, "they won't come back to the gym until the money's all gone." ■

Owner Richard Allen outside gym entrance

CAMERA CLICKS

PHOTO BY RAY BAILEY

Legendary trainer Lou Duva and great cutman Joe Souza have a conversation, 21st century style. How ironic that this photo was taken in Denver the day of the recent rematch between Hector Camacho and Roberto Duran, a matchup that most definitely should have been left back in the 20th century.

PHOTO COURTESY OF ADRIAN DOSH

Purists everywhere cringe as Laila Ali, somewhat of a gimmick in and of herself, gets involved in one of boxing's most controversial gimmicks, intergender matches. Actually, that's actor John Allen Nelson playfully tapping Ali on the set of the syndicated series Sheena. *Ali stars as a fighter in an episode scheduled to air November 3.*

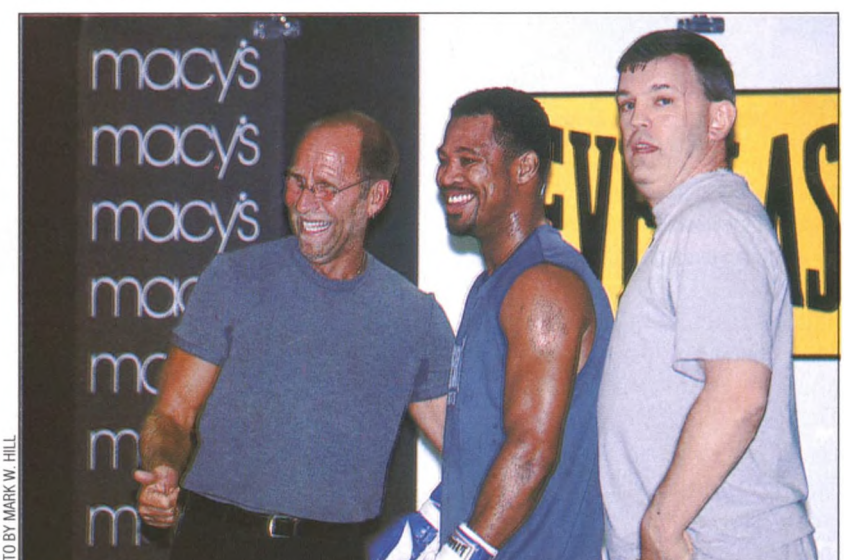


PHOTO BY MARK W. HILL

An Everlast-ing partnership: Chairman and CEO of Everlast George Horowitz enjoys a public workout with Shane Mosley, who recently inked an endorsement deal with the equipment and apparel manufacturer. Teddy Atlas emceed the event, though from the looks of his waistline, participating in the workout wouldn't have been a bad idea for the trainer and ESPN2 boxing analyst.

PHOTO BY TEDDY BLACKBURN

The last time we saw such a colorful Kermit, green was his color of choice. Undefeated welterweight prospect Kermit Cintron, however, prefers the red, white, and blue of the Puerto Rican flag. One opponent Cintron would be wise to avoid in the future is Bernard "The Executioner" Hopkins, who might just remove Cintron's head and throw it on the floor.

PHOTO COURTESY OF ADRIAN BUSH

It's been a tremendous year for the late Randy Turpin. First, the former middleweight champ was inducted into the International Boxing Hall of Fame, and now, a statue of Turpin has been placed in Warwick Market Square in England. That's popular British former heavyweight contender Sir Henry Cooper, the unveiler, to the right of the statue.

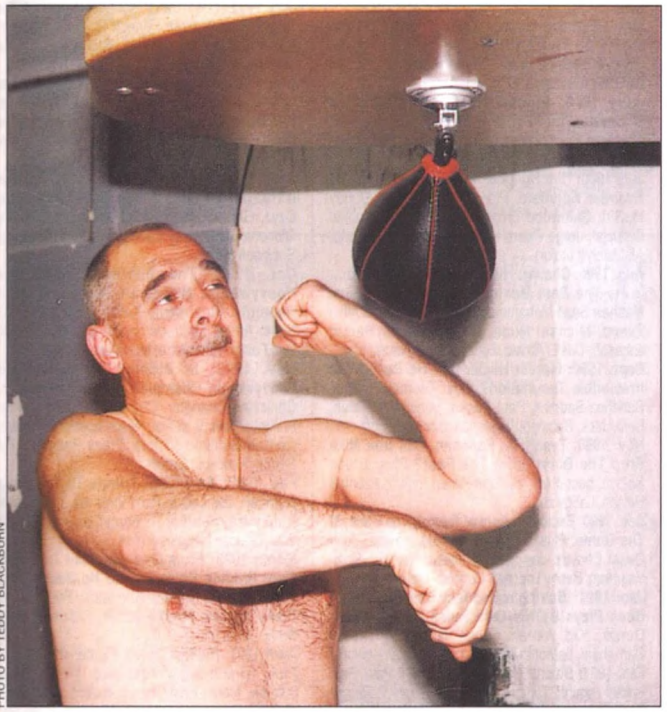


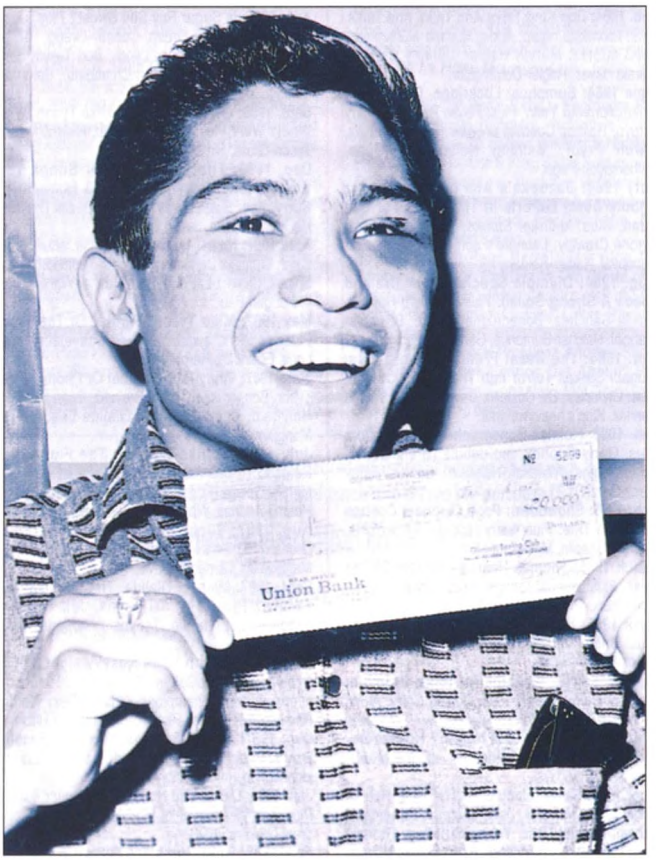
PHOTO BY TEDDY BLACKBURN

Arnie Rosenthal is best known as a fight manager and a broadcaster, but he appears to know a thing or two about how to operate inside the ropes as well. Physique-wise, nobody will ever confuse Rosenthal with that other muscular Arnold, but he looks like he could probably go a few rounds if he had to.

PHOTO BY TEDDY BLACKBURN

Juan heck of a guy: Former featherweight champion Juan LaPorte (left) organized a charity softball game in August to help financially troubled former junior lightweight champ Alfredo Escalara, who was one of LaPorte's idols growing up. The game was played in the Bronx, and though LaPorte and Escalara's birth certificates indicated that they were both over the age of 12, the game went on as scheduled.

NOSTALGIA CORNER



The next time Vernon Forrest whines that $1.5-million isn't enough to fight Shane Mosley, or Floyd Mayweather calls $2-million per fight "slave wages," remember this photo of how ecstatic Jose Becerra was to pick up his check for a measly $20,000 for the fight in which he became the world bantamweight champion. Becerra kayoed Alphonse Halimi in the eighth round on July 8, 1959, in Los Angeles to win the title.

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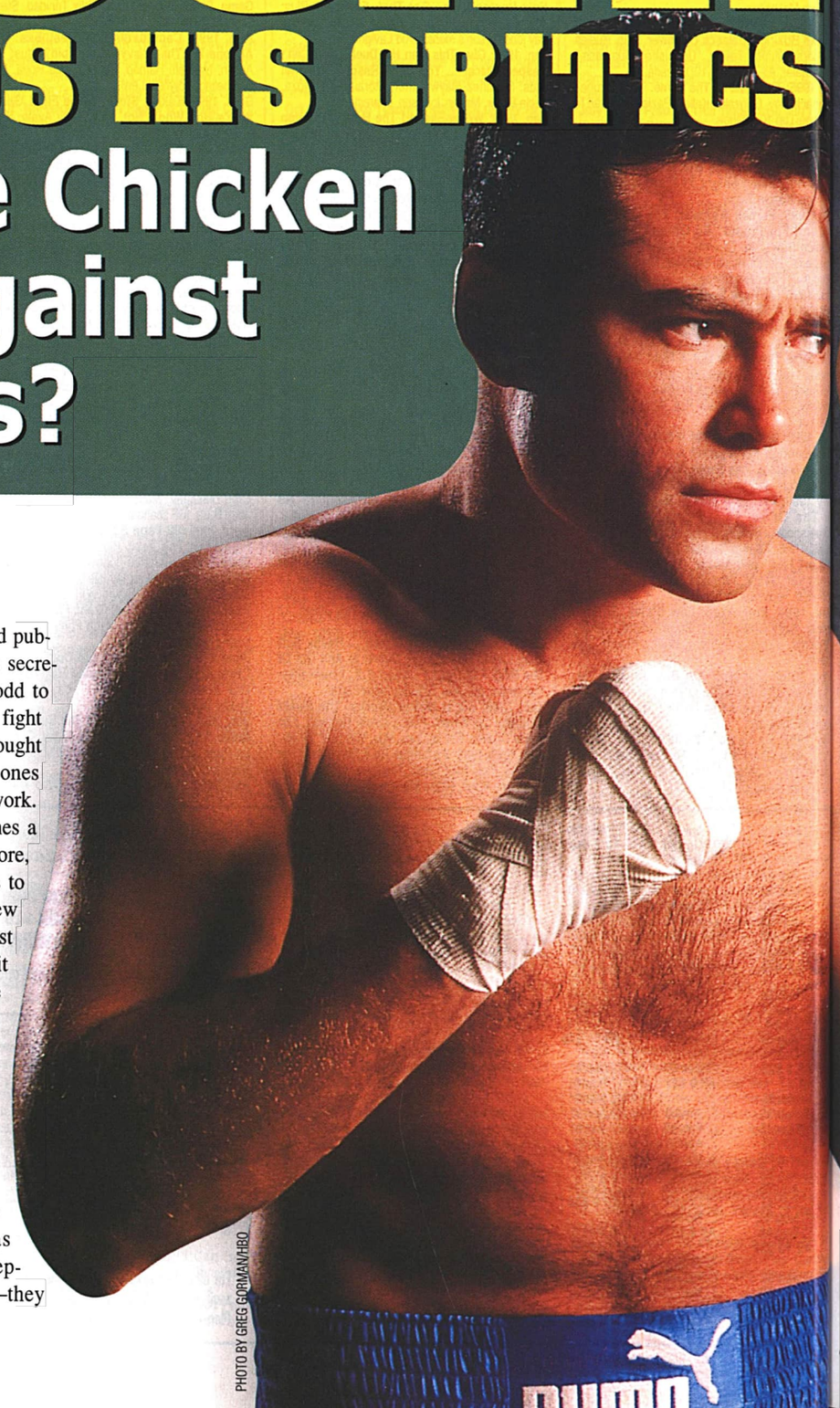
OSCAR FEEDS HIS CRITICS

Did He Chicken Out Against Vargas?



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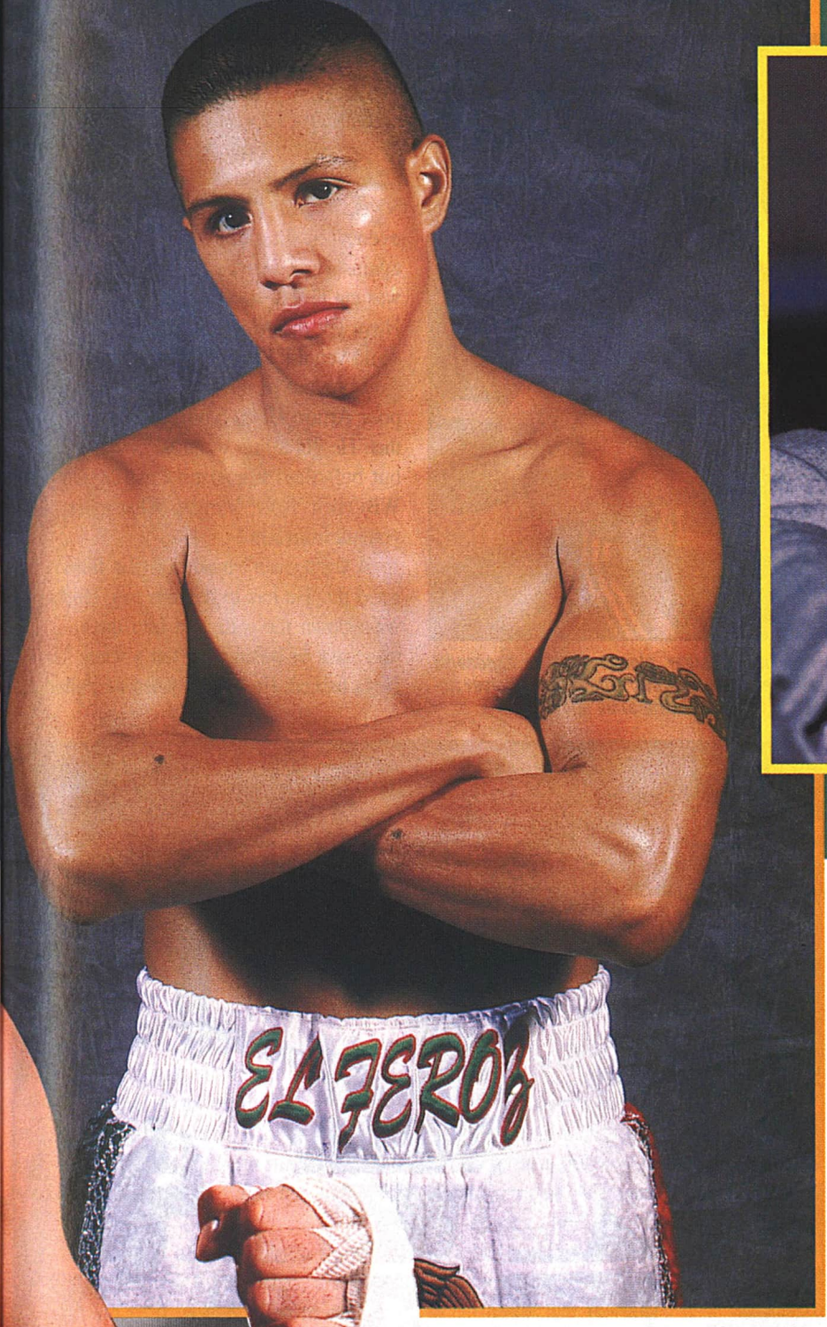

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Still waiting: Vargas thought he had a match with his arch-enemy all wrapped up, but when De La Hoya pulled out to fight obscure Roman Karmazin, "El Feroz" lost what would have been the largest purse of his career.

PHOTO BY MARTY ROSENGARTEN

When a fighter looks like this, marketing and public relations become an overriding concern. But even though De La Hoya remains a bona fide pay-per-view attraction, hardcore boxing fans are increasingly drifting away.

By William Dettloff

Before fighters had agents and public relations guys and press secretaries, they did something odd to gain the approval and interest of the fight public: They fought a lot and they fought top guys; at least the really good ones did. It was as regular as going to work. They went to work a couple of times a month if they could, sometimes more, and they sought out other top guys to go to work with, even if they knew they could lose. If it was good, honest work they gave, and if they kept it entertaining and lost, it wasn't the end of the world and there was no "comeback." They just went back to work a few weeks later.

These guys didn't have demographics and endorsement contracts to worry about. They didn't care about pay-per-view buy rates or the number of hotel suites their posse would get when the contract was negotiated. With a couple of exceptions—Jack Dempsey, Joe Louis—they didn't have a promoter or someone leaning over their shoulder during postfight interviews, whispering to them just the right things to say to create just the right perception. Public perception wasn't manipulated that way. They weren't politicians. They were fighters. Generally, how the fight public perceived them was determined by how well they fought, for how long, and against what level of competition. None of the other garbage mattered. What the hell was public relations? But now there's television and pay-per-view and lots of money to throw around and lots of guys who want to get wealthy on their investments.

So to some guys, public relations and public perception is important business. Just being a good fighter, or even a very good one, is not a sure way to get filthy rich, which is the whole point anyway.

Oscar De La Hoya is a damned good prize fighter. You can hate him if you want, but a gold medal and professional world titles at lightweight, junior welterweight, welterweight, and junior middleweight do not lie. There are 34 guys out there who will tell you to your face how good De La Hoya is because he whipped each of them. It would be 35 if the judges who scored his fight with Felix Trinidad had done so with their eyes open—regardless of whether he ran the last few rounds—and everyone agrees that Trinidad is an all-time great. Shane Mosley, the one guy to really beat De La Hoya, did so convincingly but not overwhelmingly, and he had to come back over the last half of the fight to do it. There is

PHOTO BY JOHN POMPANIO

Earlier in his career, De La Hoya was criticized for picking on older, slower, smaller opponents such as Jesse James Leija (above) and Julio Cesar Chavez (below). Now, following wins over no-hopers Arturo Gatti and Francisco Castillejo, he's hearing the same complaints again.

little dispute over Mosley's quality, even if he's not recognized, not yet anyway, as another all-time great.

So it is clear that De La Hoya is an exceptional fighter, and if you don't think so by now, you just are not watching him closely or objectively. It also is clear that his ring skills notwithstanding, he has relied heavily throughout his career on cultivating the right image. (And in case you're wondering, yes, it certainly is possible to be at once a great fighter and a great public relations machine; see Sugar Ray Leonard.) He has gone far out of his way to say the right things, smile the right way and at the right times, dress fashionably, sport a trendy haircut. To De La Hoya, public relations is a very big deal. How he is viewed by the public out of the ring is every bit as important to him and those around him who want in on the cash as how he is viewed in the ring. That's the way he's done it and he's one of the wealthiest fighters ever, so go try and argue with him.

From things De La Hoya has said in the past, one also may come away with the sense that how he is remembered as a fighter is important to him. He knows something about fight history—though he is no Mike Tyson in this regard—and he gives the impression that he wants to be counted among the greats. That's where the talk about getting revenge for his defeats comes from. All the greats avenge their most significant defeats, or at least try hard to. That's part of public relations, too. He wants to be remembered well. That means he needs to accomplish great things in the ring.

It was an excellent move, public relations-wise and in terms of securing a good place in history, when De La Hoya announced he was going to fight Fernando Vargas. The fight is a natural. They have history. It's not pleasant. That makes for good fights, and you couldn't say De La Hoya was playing it safe and going after easy guys. Whether or not Vargas was ruined by Trinidad, he's a young, tough, once-defeated former world champion. In his first fight after Trinidad he took better care of Wilfredo Rivera than De La Hoya did a few years ago, even with the knockdown Rivera scored against him. He made Rivera quit. Rivera was cut up but still trying hard when De La Hoya got the win over him. So what more could you ask De La Hoya to do? He got his easy one out of the way when he blew out poor Arturo Gatti. You have to allow him that. He got a title when he blanked earnest but bulletless Francisco Castillejo for the WBC belt. Now, Vargas. What more could you ask from him?

A fighter can't make a living forever off good p.r. He has to deliver, too. He has to walk down the aisle and into the ring and take care of business. That's when De La Hoya balked. He blew it when he pulled the rug out from under the fight and left all of us wondering what the hell happened. You had to wonder then, after all this, if he's concerned at all anymore about what the public thinks or how he'll be remembered, because top guys just don't do that with a fight that good and that big and, potentially, that dangerous.

"He may not be worried that much anymore about public perception because he really doesn't have to be," said noted trainer and ESPN2 *Friday Night Fights* analyst Teddy Atlas. "He's already made a lot of

PHOTO BY CHRIS FARINA

Some have suggested that De La Hoya vetoed the Vargas fight because he wanted to have more time to work with new trainer Floyd Mayweather Sr., who has only been aboard since "The Golden Boy" lost to Shane Mosley. Others feel he simply chickened out.

money and there has to be some urgency associated with taking a risky fight like that, some very good compelling reason to do it. Maybe he doesn't see any. He did something like 400,000 pay-per-view buys against Castillejo, who is not really a well-known guy. So maybe he figures, *Why would I fight a guy like Vargas when I can still make good money fighting guys who look less threatening?"*

Indeed, above all else, it is a fighter's duty to get paid for his services, and if he can get paid well, it's his duty to do that, too. After all, it's *his* brain getting batted around, and there may be no vocation more worthy of big dollars than professional fighter. Lots of guys have taken the easy road most of the way toward cashing in on the big fight or two, and then been done with the game. Really, you can't blame them for that, and most of the time we don't begrudge a guy too much for doing it that way as long as he tried hard and was tough and gave us a few goose bumps along the way. There's only so far some guys can go. Did you ever boo Ray Mancini? How about George Foreman in his second career? But from some guys we expect more.

"Is De La Hoya held to a different standard than most fighters? Yes, he probably is, but rightly so," Atlas said. "When you get paid the kind of money he gets paid, we should expect a little more from him. And when he talks the way he does sometimes, almost arrogant, like when he told Trinidad and Mosley, two guys that beat him, that they had to come to him and get in line and take the money he offered, then yes, he has to perform at a certain level if he's going to talk in those terms. If we didn't raise that standard, then everyone could talk in those terms and there would be no consequences."

De La Hoya's perceived arrogance has even rubbed the wrong way guys who didn't mind the egotism of Muhammad Ali or Sugar Ray Leonard or Pernell Whitaker. Maybe it's somehow more grating when it's coming from a guy who looks like De La Hoya, a guy who can steal your girlfriend and kick your ass if you don't like it. Fighters aren't supposed to affect young girls the way De La Hoya does. They're not supposed to look the way he does and they're not supposed to sing Latin love songs on Grammy-nominated CDs. If he were just another good fighter, or even just another very good fighter, somehow, his arrogance probably wouldn't so affect people. But he's more than just another very good fighter, and when a guy seemingly gets all the breaks and then is arrogant to boot, people don't like it. You can't blame them, and De La Hoya doesn't help himself when he says, "I'm carrying boxing on my shoulders," a refrain we heard from him over and over a few years ago.

De La Hoya didn't help himself either when he pulled the plug on the Vargas fight. He has never has had to look hard for critics, no matter what he did in the ring. They always were ready to jump on him, and when it was announced that he would not fight Vargas, but instead would make a mandatory defense against unknown Roman Karmazin, the guys who always are looking for reasons to knock De La Hoya—and, importantly, even some who are not—converged on him. Check out the boxing Web sites. Lurk in the chat rooms.

Ask a few of your buddies who are fight fans what they think of De La Hoya now,

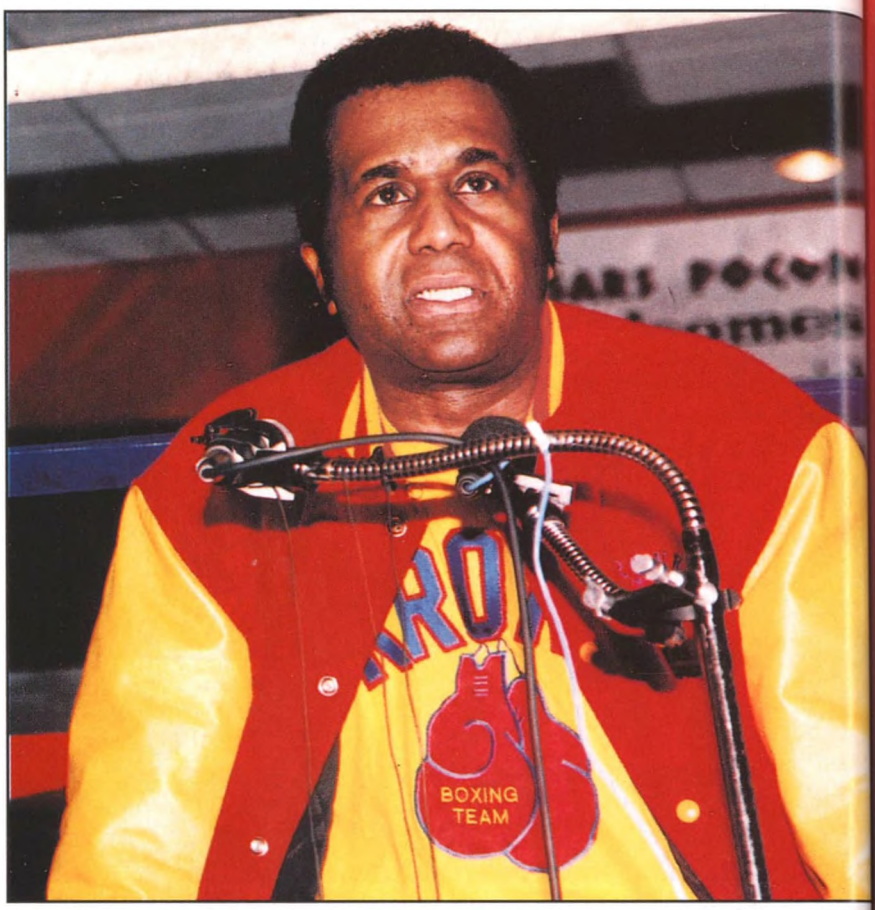
even if they were on the fence about him before. It's open season on "The Golden Boy" and you can forget that he fought Trinidad and Mosley practically back-to-back. Now he's the same guy who picked on the smaller, weaker Genaro Hernandez and Jesse James Leija, the older and slower Pernell Whitaker and Julio Cesar Chavez, the guy who looked for the weakest guys with the biggest names and used what those guys used to be to create his own star. And now he's doing it again by screwing Vargas and taking on the WBC's junior middleweight version of Rick Frazier. That's the perception, in most quarters at least.

"I'm not ready to jump on De La Hoya," said Hall of Fame trainer Emanuel Steward. "It looks to the public like he's starting to get selective with his opponents, but that's because he's been fighting good guys for a long time. Outside of Trinidad and in the lower weights, I can't think of many guys recently that have fought so many tough fighters in a short period of time: Whitaker, and Trinidad, and Mosley, and Ike Quartey when Quartey was really something else. Only Trinidad fought the same caliber of guys over such a short time. The public got used to that, and now that he's fighting this other guy and not Vargas, they think he's getting picky. But I don't see it that way."

Steward has a theory about why De La Hoya pulled out of the Vargas fight that has little to do with the published versions, which centered around De La Hoya's aversion to being stripped of the WBC title, or that the Vargas camp annoyed him by filibustering over the minutest details of the contract.

"I heard it was because Oscar didn't have boxing guys negotiating for him and his guy was out-negotiated by Vargas' guy. Vargas got a lot more than Oscar wanted him to, $8-million I think, and when Oscar and his guys got to see the contract, they realized he was getting a much better deal than he had to get. So they just killed it, and they'll make it again later."

It sounds perfectly plausible when you consider that De La Hoya has a well-documented mean streak that he hides when the camera light comes on, and also when you know that it wasn't until recently that he was willing to fight Vargas at all. There's such animosity between the two that De La Hoya always swore he'd never fight Vargas—if only to deny him the biggest paycheck of his career. One more thing: As Steward pointed out, nobody heard much from Vargas when the fight fell through. The kid doesn't hold his tongue much. It doesn't take much to tick him off, and De La Hoya's one of his least favorite people on the planet. All things considered, his reaction was damned near polite. Steward's take: "It's because he knows they're going to make the fight later." Still, there is reason to suspect De La Hoya pulled out for other reasons.



Emanuel Steward, who trained De La Hoya for a handful of fights back in 1997, believes that th Vargas fight fell through because Oscar didn't like the financial terms of the contract and figured h could get more money by taking the fight at a later date.

"De La Hoya may not be as committed as he should be or as he knows he has to be to get in with a guy like Vargas," offered Atlas. "Or, and you don't automatically consider this with a guy who comes off as confident as De La Hoya does, maybe he's not as confident as we all think he is. Maybe he's got doubts, and so he's going to try to give the impression that he's beating tough guys by facing the mandatories the organization gives him. And he can make money doing it. A lot of guys do that to try and show that they're fighting the top guys, but we all know the reality is something different. You only do what you have to do, what you're forced to do."

Only De La Hoya, his closest associates, and maybe Vargas and his side know why De La Hoya walked away from a fight as good as this one. Maybe only De La Hoya knows the reason and maybe it doesn't matter why. Maybe it doesn't even matter that he did it. Public perception can change quickly, even for De La Hoya.

"Theoretically you would think he pays a price for walking away, but I don't know if he does," Atlas conceded. "When people see the same names on pay-per-view all the time, they tend to buy when they see those names again in the future."

That's what it comes down to. The critics can accuse De La Hoya of being afraid of Vargas. They can complain that he ducks good fighters and real fights and accuse of him of being a fraud. Oscar is going to be Oscar, public perception be damned. You can hate him. But let him sign to fight Vargas or Trinidad or Mosley again. You'll watch, and you'll pay to do it. You won't be able to help yourself. ■

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PHOTO BY CHRIS FARINA

WHAT CAN WE EXPECT FROM WLADIMIR KLITSCHKO?

20 Experts State Their Views

Compiled by Joe Santoliquito

Boxing fans have grown more than a little tired of fragmented titles. We want each division to be headed up by one legit champion who won the title not in the courtroom, but in the ring. In the light heavyweight and middleweight divisions, it's already happened, with the junior welterweight division soon to follow. For a time there, we even had one heavyweight champ, until the courts plucked the WBA title out from under Lennox Lewis. By virtue of beating Lewis, Hasim Rahman is now the true champ, but he's not the only guy wearing a recognized heavyweight belt, and many observers don't consider him the world's best heavyweight.

Is there someone among the current crop of heavyweight hopefuls who has the necessary physical tools and focus to make us forget the murkiness of the alphabet soup titles and gain universal acceptance as the king of boxing's glamour division? Some think the man to do it is Wladimir Klitschko, the 1996 Olympic super heavyweight gold medalist.

Though some of the questions about the 6'5", 250-pound Ukrainian behemoth have been answered in his recent appearances on HBO, there are still plenty of intangibles concerning Klitschko, 37-1 (34), that we can't seem to pin down. For one, how much heart does he have? We know Klitschko can fight, but will he be able to handle the hurt that comes with fighting the world's best heavyweights?

To get a better gauge on where Klitschko is going, THE RING asked 20 knowledgeable insiders whether or not the 25-year-old contender can become the first universally recognized heavyweight champion to hail from Germany since Max Schmeling captured the crown more than 70 years ago. Opinions vary, but most experts agree that Klitschko has to be considered a strong contender for the linear heavyweight title Rahman and Lewis will fight for in November. Their biggest concerns narrow on Klitschko's opponents to date, as well as his one professional loss, to American journeyman Ross Puritty in December 1998. Klitschko's biggest victory came in October 2000 against Chris Byrd, when he took the spurious WBO heavyweight title Byrd won from Klitschko's older brother, Vitaly. Klitschko's victory over Byrd gained even more validity after Byrd upset David Tua in August.

Most experts, however, agree there are still more questions about Klitschko than answers. Here's what they had to say:

LARRY MERCHANT (HBO analyst): "I do think Klitschko can become the undisputed champion. I think he's the best young heavyweight to come along in a long time, the best since Mike Tyson. He seems to be the first of the new breed of giant heavyweights who has athleticism to go along with his strength. He has hand speed and a kind of nimble balance for a big man. There are questions about him, but we should preface that by saying that there are always questions. There were about Ali, Holmes, Tyson, Bowe, Holyfield.

Michael Grant had star quality, but there were questions about his lack of amateur background. This guy has that background. This is not a guy who's likely to not trust his ability in a big fight, as Grant did when he fought Lewis. The difference between Klitschko and Lewis, who has certainly had an outstanding career, is that Klitschko is a naturally aggressive fighter. Lewis is a natural counterpuncher.

Al Maguire, the basketball coach, used to say, 'Sometimes an athlete can be too intelligent for his own good.' Why would an intel-

With Klitschko's record full of victories over mid-range heavyweights, like Monte Barrett, many pundits wonder what Klitschko will do when matched against more powerful opponents like Lennox Lewis or Hasim Rahman.

ligent guy like Klitschko fight through a terrible beating? How will he deal with the adversity and hurt that comes with the territory? Those questions will be eventually asked. But he seems like he's a guy who wants to be on the top of the mountain. His size and skill will get him to where he wants to go. He's a very likable kid, too. If there is one fighter in the world I could buy stock in, I'd take Klitschko right now."

KURT EMHOFF (writer for Maxboxing.com): "Klitschko beats any of the titleholders out there right now. But Klitschko is not a finished product. A fighter who presses him will give him a lot of problems. He tends to flinch when people back him up. No one has made a concerted effort to dig into him. The things I like about him are his size, his jab, and his power in both hands. He has a great amateur background and he's not as robotic as his brother and Michael Grant. Klitschko is still a work in progress, but he's not any worse than Lennox Lewis was when Lewis was coming up. He certainly has all of the tools to be heavyweight champion of the world."

EMANUEL STEWARD (trainer of Lennox Lewis and HBO analyst): "He has one test he's going to have to pass, but other than that, he has all the attributes to be an undisputed heavyweight champion. He has a very good amateur background, and he has natural athleticism. The biggest question I have about him is whether or not he could grind it out. I have serious doubts whether or not he can win a fight where he has to use more than just his size. But I definitely think he has all the ability to one day be an undisputed heavyweight champion."

MAX KELLERMAN (ESPN2 analyst): "Klitschko is a very smooth offensive fighter, and what he really is is a good fighter who's big. If he was 220, he wouldn't be the real factor that he is now. He's offensive, with good, short punches with either hand, and he's patient. But with the exception of Chris Byrd, his promoters have been very careful as to how he's been matched. We know Klitschko can fight, but what we don't know is if Klitschko can fight back. There has only been one heavyweight with potential greatness since Riddick Bowe, and that was Ike Ibeabuchi. It's not Klitschko."

CHRIS BYRD (heavyweight contender): "Wladimir could be an undisputed heavyweight champion. He has good boxing ability, and he has the size. But I don't think he's ever been tested. I'm a little guy and if I fought him again, I'd go after him. I can't take anything away from him, he's a good fighter. He's young, too, so he's going to get better as he fights. But if you saw my swollen eye in that fight with him and I were him, I would have knocked Chris Byrd out. But I do think he can one day be an undisputed heavyweight champion—and then I'd obviously like another shot at him."

Veteran HBO ringside analyst Larry Merchant pointed out that Klitschko is likely to trust his ability in a big fight, unlike Michael Grant in his title showdown with Lennox Lewis (pictured).

LOU DiBELLA (boxing adviser): "I think he has the best chance of anybody out there right now. When I look out there, you have a lot of the old suspects, but among the up-and-coming guys, he stands alone. I'm not going to say with certainty he'll be undisputed champion, but he's emerging at a time when he can be."

DAN RAFAEL (*USA Today* boxing writer): "I absolutely think he could be undisputed heavyweight champion of the world. Skill-wise, power-wise, he's definitely among the best in the world right now. I do think Klitschko can beat Hasim Rahman or Lennox Lewis. He certainly has the most potential of anyone in the world. I would still like to see him get hit on the chin, and he hasn't had that test yet. Chris Byrd was a tough guy to fight, and Klitschko walked right through him. That, to me, was impressive. There's no question he can be the undisputed world champion."

TEDDY ATLAS (ESPN2 analyst): "I'm surprised how everyone goes over the top about the guy. It's important to develop yourself a little. Against Charles Shufford, he wasn't forced to adjust to any diverse situations. He may have the skills to become a world champion, but whether or not he can develop the character to be a world champion is something that we'll have to see. He's already quit once, and before we anoint him as the greatest thing since Coke, there are more questions that need to be asked. I do see him on a level with Hasim Rahman and Lennox Lewis. With the heavyweight landscape the way it is today, the character questions may never be asked of Klitschko."

BOBBY CZYZ (Showtime analyst): "I want to see Klitschko in there with a big guy who pushes him and presses him. He's beaten some marginal heavyweights and heavyweights without great power. Being that big, it's difficult to look smooth, but he does, and he does have a phenomenal body, but in the overall picture of things, I don't see anything great. He still has to prove himself to me."

PHOTO BY RAY BAILEY

Teddy Atlas wonders what all the fuss is about when it comes to Klitschko. The ESPN2* Friday Night Fights *analyst still needs to be convinced Klitschko has the character to be a world champion.

STEVE KIM (writer for Maxboxing.com): "Klitschko has the ability to make some noise, but I'm not really a believer in Klitschko. Both Klitschko brothers have shown they're frontrunners. As for Wladimir, I wonder what would really happen if someone got within his reach and up in his chest. To a large degree, both Klitschko brothers have been protected by some of the guys they've fought in Europe. They're also stiff and mechanical, like Herman Munster."

NICK CHARLES (Showtime blow-by-blow announcer): "Klitschko, given his age and his ability, I definitely think can be the heavyweight champion. He's faced good opposition at this stage of his career, he doesn't get hit that much, and he's not this quintessential big, plodding oaf. Given the timing of the situation with the heavyweight division, Klitschko can certainly be the recognized world champion."

JACK OBERMAYER (veteran boxing writer): "I don't think he's as good as people make him out to be. He certainly has credentials, but I've seen too many upright Europeans fall by the wayside. He's intelligent, has a good jab, and certainly has some power in his fists. But to some degree, he's like his brother; he's almost programmed. What will happen when he has to go from Plan A to Plan B? I'm just not sold on him. You're supposed to be able to fight naturally. I'm skeptical about Klitschko right now."

FRES OQUENDO (heavyweight contender): "Klitschko is a big question to me. He has great power and a great future, but he has to fight over a period of time and be able to take a big punch. He beat Charles Shufford, who's not even a top-10 opponent. He beat Byrd, but Byrd to me is not a heavyweight. Byrd has great skills, but has no power. Klitschko has demonstrated he does have skills, but right now, I don't think he can be the world champion. He still has to face guys like me, like Kirk Johnson, like Evander Holyfield."

ERIC BOTTJER (Cedric Kushner Promotions matchmaker): "He's the best heavyweight in the world. I've thought so since 2000, when he beat Chris Byrd. It wasn't only the fact that he beat Chris Byrd, who can make people look bad, but he made Chris Byrd look bad. That's a tough thing to do. He has tremendous punching power and he's in tremendous condition. People forget he punched himself out against Ross Puritty; he didn't quit. That's a bad misconception many make about Klitschko. They question his character because of it. Wladimir will be champion whenever he gets a shot."

BRIAN KENNY (ESPN2 studio host): "Max Kellerman and I have our best arguments on this. Max likens Klitschko to a sort of Michael Grant, that people are wowed by his physique and size. The thing is, this guy has beaten Chris Byrd, and we all know how good Chris Byrd is, and we can't hold his size against him. We have to ask what he has done against top-level opposition. What top-level opposition will be out there? Does Rahman get better? Does Lewis retire? Who says Klitschko can't beat a top-level contender? But I'm not overwhelmed by him. I place Rahman and Lewis well ahead of Klitschko."

TIM SMITH (New York *Daily News* boxing writer): "I think Wladimir has the kind of skills to get there, but I'm reserving judgment on him. I haven't seen him in a competitive fight. I'd really like to see him in a real battle. It's one thing to knock out Charles Shufford, but it's another when someone like Kirk Johnson is firing back at him. The thing that is interesting about Wladimir that we in America find appealing is that he's not a typical standup European fighter. I just want to see him against someone who is going to give him a test."

JIM LAMPLEY (HBO blow-by-blow announcer): "I think Klitschko is the best of the heavyweights right now. I think that being young and hungry is a huge asset. The technical progress he's made offensively is impressive. He throws the jab so well, and his right hand is quicker than Lewis'. He fouls effectively too, and he tends to get away with most of his effective fouls. To me, the benchmark is Lewis, and if they were to fight next month, I would make it a pick-'em fight. I think Wladimir really burns for it though, and he has a tremendous desire. With the way his technical development has really improved, I make him the best heavyweight in the world right now."

HBO blow-by-blow man Jim Lampley is a firm believer in the German-based heavyweight. "To me, the benchmark is Lewis, and if they were to fight next month, I would make it a pick-'em fight," Lampley said.

JOE GOOSSEN (veteran trainer): "Klitschko has the size, definitely has the power, is very mobile for a guy who is 6'5", and has excellent boxing skills. The only question is how he reacts when he gets hit by a guy his size. Otherwise, he has to be someone you would figure could one day be the heavyweight champ, along the lines of a Rahman or Lewis."

CHRIS THORNE (*Newark Star-Ledger* boxing writer): "I'm not too sure. I think he's kind of an in-between guy. A lot depends on who is still out there. If Lennox is gone, Tyson is gone, and Rahman doesn't continue his pace, Klitschko could wind up being out there by himself. I wouldn't put him high on my list, though, because I'm not that sold on his talent."

CHARLES SHUFFORD (heavyweight fighter): "Klitschko has a good chance to be the undisputed heavyweight champ. He protects himself pretty good. When I fought him, he's about what I expected. I figured he'd be strong; not Mike Tyson-strong, but he'd be strong. He fights carefully, and that's pretty much what I saw. He's good—good enough to whip anybody." ■

PHOTO BY CHRIS FARINA

Klitschko's biggest victory thus far was a unanimous decision over Chris Byrd to claim the WBO belt. Though undersized for a heavyweight, Byrd's decisive victory over the hard-punching David Tua (pictured) lent plenty of credibility to Klitschko's win over the elusive southpaw.

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More Hawk Than Dove

DONT UNDERESTIMATE CHRIS BYRD!

By Kevin Iole

Rarely has a fighter been as aptly named as Chris Byrd. He flits around the ring, pecking at his opponent like a pigeon pecking at bread crumbs. And if you ask his trainer, his father Joe, he sometimes acts like a total Byrd-brain.

"Sometimes," the elder Byrd said, "Chris gets it in his mind to do something in the ring, and no matter what we say, he just goes ahead and does it."

But against the powerpunching David Tua, Byrd made his father happy and stayed with the plan, a plan many thought wouldn't work against such a physically strong opponent. Tua won many media converts prior to the August 18 fight with his new-look body, a sculpted 233 pounds that replaced the soft and out-of-shape look he had when he weighed 245 for his fight last year against Lennox Lewis. Tua had been all but written off after his one-sided thrashing at the hands of Lewis, a fight many believed he could win.

Tua, along with his team, smartly realized he was in no shape to be fighting for the heavyweight title and he went about to transforming himself. He regaled the media with his stories of ice baths, which he took twice a week for up to 37 minutes a time as a fat-burning device as well as a way to help his muscles to recover from a workout. He monitored his core temperature so frequently, he had a thermometer sticking out of his mouth as regularly as George Burns had a cigar hanging out of his. As he told the stories, breathless reporters huddled around him to capture every word. At the final news conference, two days before the fight, Byrd stood by himself, a bemused grin creasing his face, as Tua, dressed in battle fatigues, held court.

"Don't count me out," Byrd said, teasingly. "There *are* two guys fighting on Saturday, you know."

As it turned out, Byrd was wrong. Only one of them was *really* fighting, and it wasn't Tua, who was befuddled from start to finish by Byrd. Tua's body looked different than the Pillsbury Doughboy look he had against Lewis, but little else changed. He simply had no answer for a fighter who knows how to box. For most of the 12 rounds at the Cox Pavilion in Las Vegas, Tua, 38-3 (33), inexorably stalked Byrd, throwing occasional left-right combinations to the body. Byrd would respond in nearly the same way every time, ripping off combinations to the head that left Tua's face the color of a plum.

He won on all three judges' scorecards, with Art Lurie and Chuck Giampa each seeing it 116-112 and Paul Smith scoring it 115-113. THE RING's card was not nearly as generous to Tua and had it 119-109 in favor of Byrd, giving Tua only the last round.

The win made Byrd, 34-2 (19), the mandatory challenger to the IBF title, currently held by Hasim Rahman. Rahman will defend both the IBF and the WBC belts against Lennox Lewis on November 17 at Mandalay Bay in Las Vegas in a rematch of their historic April 22 fight in South Africa, in which Rahman lifted the championship from Lewis with a single thunderous right hand.

Byrd would be a heavy underdog against either man in the Las Vegas sports books, but that's fine with him. He was about a 4½-1 underdog against Tua, but the Tua bettors could have started ripping up their tickets as soon as the fourth round, when it had become clear that Tua's only hope was a Hail Mary punch.

"You want to say I'm too small or I don't punch or whatever, that's fine with me," said Byrd, grinning broadly. "I don't mind. I've always dreamed of fighting for the heavyweight title. When you're a kid and you fight, you always imagine yourself in the big fights. You're never a bantamweight or anything;

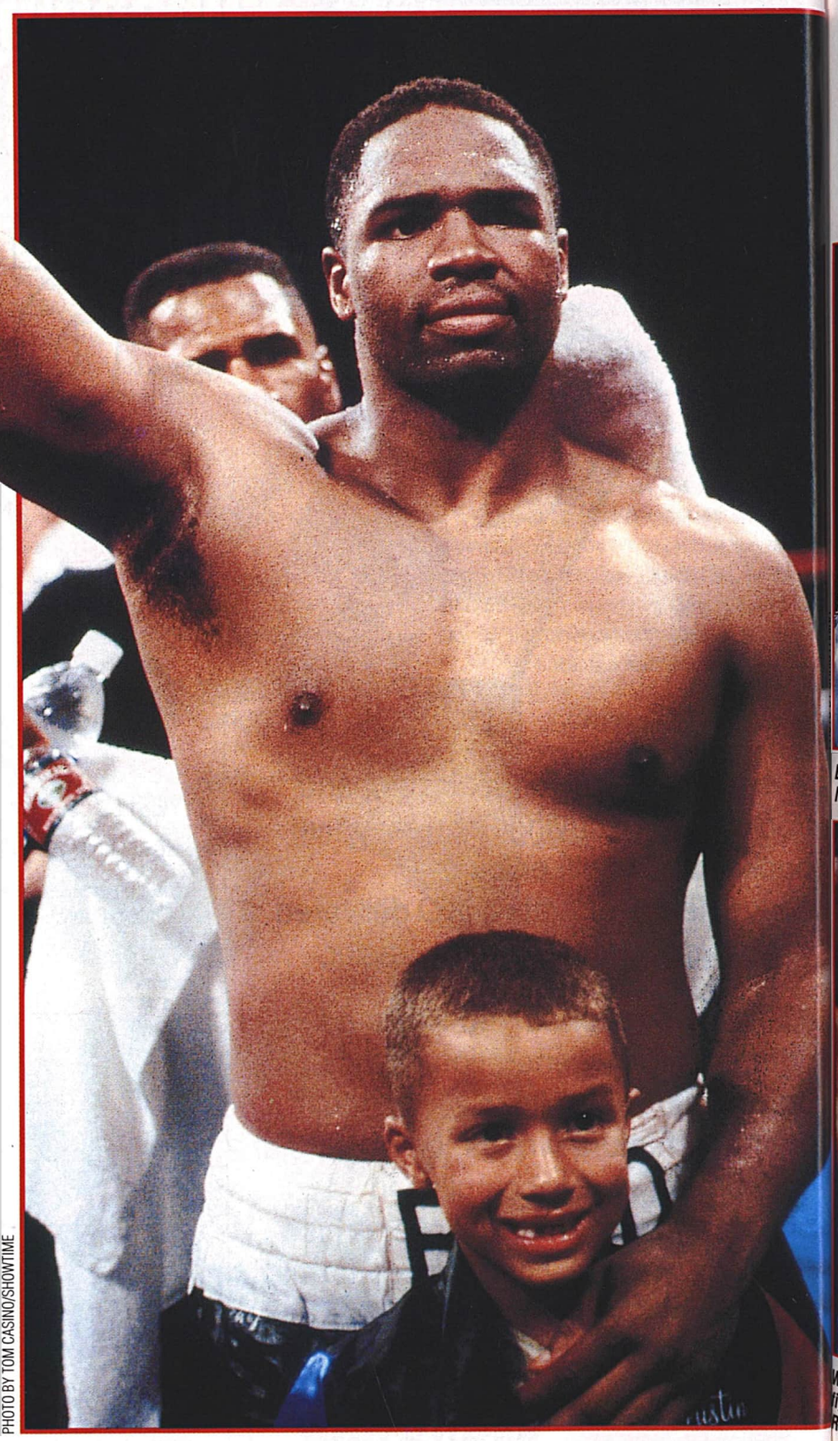


PHOTO BY TOM CASINO/SHOWTIME

Byrd's quick-strike left hand was a vital weapon against Tua. Though Byrd is by no means a heavy puncher, he hit hard enough to discourage the Samoan from wading inside and letting his bombs go.

With a four-inch height advantage over Tua, Byrd was able to use his busy southpaw jab to keep the fight at the appropriate range. However, against a taller opponent like heavyweight champion Hasim Rahman or Lennox Lewis, Byrd's jab may not be as effective.

you're always heavyweights. I've had a lot of dreams about fighting for the title. This was the vehicle to get me there."

Byrd won a silver medal in the 1992 Olympics as a middleweight, but has fought most of his pro career as a heavyweight. As a result, he has been dogged by questions about his size and his lack of power. He said in the days leading up to his fight with Tua that he would consider a drop to the cruiserweight division if he had been beaten convincingly by Tua. Later, he said he was only having fun.

"Man, that's 24 pounds," he said. "Two-four. I wish I knew how to lose that much weight. And look at me. Do I look like anything other than a heavyweight?"

The answer is, resoundingly, no. Byrd's not a big heavyweight, but he is a heavyweight. He has weighed as much as 222 in his pro career, but never has he looked as big physically or as strong as he did against Tua. He weighed 214 for Tua and kiddingly noted that "this is Ali's weight."

He didn't bring the wallop into the ring that Tua did, but Tua clearly took his share of punishment. When a bruised and swollen Tua was asked if Byrd hit hard, Byrd's wife, Tracy, crossed her fingers and said, "Please say yes." Tua gave Byrd credit and said, "I could definitely feel Chris' punches."

And while the punches were enough to get Tua's attention and to sting him on more than one occasion, the question Byrd will have to answer—over and over—is whether those same punches will be enough to deter a Lewis or a Rahman.

Byrd is generally acknowledged as having the best defense among all the top heavyweights. He was extremely elusive even when Tua pinned him against the ropes (top), and when his defense let him down, Byrd's chin proved capable of taking the hard-hitting Tua's best shots (above).

Byrd's not a guy Lewis will be eager to fight, because Lewis feasts on the fighters who come toward him and are forced to eat a steady diet of jabs and the occasional hard right hand. When your jab is about the size of a telephone pole, as is Lewis', it's a nice weapon to have against an onrushing bull. Byrd, though, is hardly going to go charging at Lewis. If Lewis knocks off Rahman and elects to keep the IBF belt and defend against Byrd—which is no cinch—he's going to have to go looking for Byrd.

Byrd doesn't necessarily run and isn't a dancer in the classic sense. He's one of the few fighters in the sport—Floyd Mayweather is another who leaps to mind—with the capability of making an opponent miss while standing directly in front of him.

Still, for Byrd to succeed against a behemoth like Lewis will take some doing.

"No one ever said it was going to be easy, especially not me," Byrd said. "But I said it before this fight and I'll say it again:

THE FOREFATHERS OF FEATHER FISTS

For every Mark McGwire or Juan Gonzalez charting a path to Cooperstown with their ability to hit the long ball, there's a Tony Gwynn or Wade Boggs headed for the same destination despite swinging a less imposing stick. The same is true in boxing, a sport in which many of the all-time greats have become immortals without much punching power. Willie Pep, Pernell Whitaker, Emile Griffith, and Miguel Canto are a few that come to mind immediately.

But in the heavyweight division, there's more of a premium placed on the big bomb. That's why Chris Byrd, for all his skill, is not a huge attraction. Nevertheless, his career must be viewed as a success at this point, at least much more of one than many experts predicted for the light-hitting blown-up middleweight. Heavyweight history has been dotted with fighters like Byrd, skilled craftsmen who achieved a great deal despite having hands of sponge. Here, in alphabetical order, are some of the best:

Jimmy Bivins: With just 31 knockouts on his 86-25-1 docket, this blown-up light heavyweight held the interim title while Joe Louis served in the Army in the mid-'40s. Among the heavyweight contenders he beat were Bob Pastor, Tami Mauriello, and Lee Savold—all by decision.

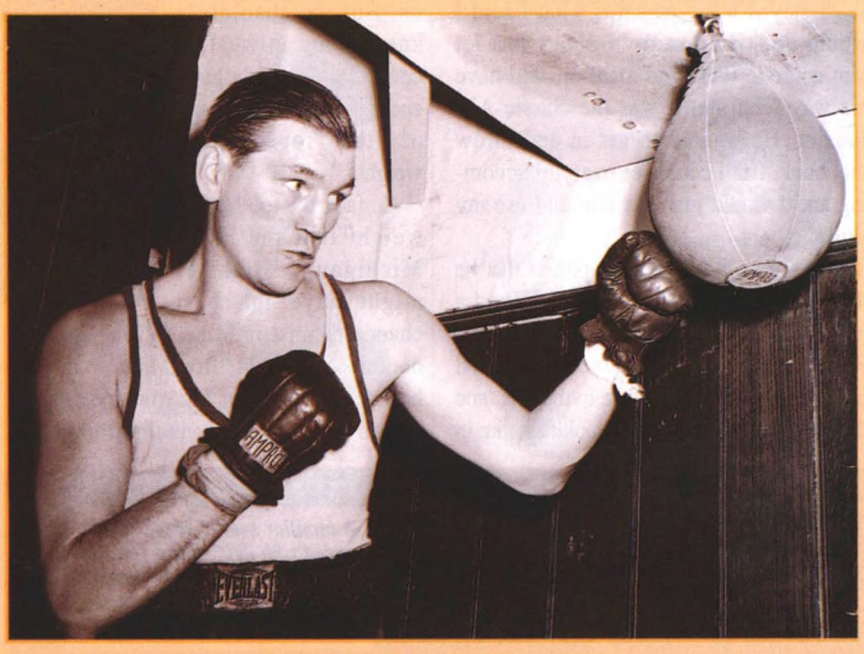
Jim Braddock: "The Cinderella Man" lacked size and strength, scoring only 27 knockouts in 87 pro fights. But his stunning upset of Max Baer to win the heavyweight title put his name in the record books forever.

Tommy Farr: His 71-22-11 (23) record makes Byrd look like Earnie Shavers, but the Welshman had tremendous speed, skill, and durability. Among his finest performances were a 12-round decision over former champ Baer and a competitive loss to a prime Joe Louis for the heavyweight title.

Tommy Jackson: The nickname, "Hurricane," says it all, as Jackson, 34-9-1 (16), threw a torrential downpour of punches to make up for his modest power. He decisioned a faded Ezzard Charles twice, but fell short against Floyd Patterson in his lone shot at the title.

Roland LaStarza: One of the top heavyweights in the world in the late-'40s and early-'50s, LaStarza had virtually no punch, yet arguably beat Rocky Marciano in their first meeting. The Bronx contender was kayoed in 11 rounds in the rematch for the title, and finished with a 56-8 (25) record.

Ernie Terrell: At 6'6" and with an affinity for holding, Terrell could be called the Henry Akinwande of the '60s. But he lacked Akinwande's power, scoring just 21 kayos in 46 wins. Terrell decisioned Eddie Machen for the WBA title, and defended it with decisions over George Chuvalo and Doug Jones.



Tommy was Farr from a puncher

Tony Tubbs: Though he had plenty of weight behind his punches, the blubbery Tubbs scored only 22 knockouts among his 40 victories. The Cincinnati fatty won the WBA title in '85 by outpointing Greg Page.

Jimmy Young: Perhaps the most similar fighter on this list to Byrd, Young was a defensive whiz with a light but accurate punch. His 34-17-2 (11) record included two distance wins over Ron Lyle and a major upset of George Foreman, plus a disputed loss to Muhammad Ali for the title.

—Eric Raskin

You have to about kill me to get me out of there. I'm going to be there, round after round. It's a fight, and I come to fight."

Byrd has fought both Klitschko brothers, defeating Vitali when the elder Klitschko quit on the stool after injuring his shoulder, and losing to Wladimir in a fight the young man from the Ukraine dominated from start to finish. The Klitschkos are similar in size to Lewis and presented Byrd with all sorts of problems as he struggled to get close enough to land.

"If Chris goes in there with a guy like Lennox, he's going to have to do a good job of slipping and moving, turning and giving angles," Joe Byrd said. "You can't just make him miss. You have to make him miss and pay and get out of there."

Lewis can be frustrated, and no one frustrates quite like Byrd. You look high and he's gone low. You look inside and he's ducked outside.

Rahman predicted that Byrd would beat Tua, noting that "Byrd is the kind of guy who just out-thinks guys. A guy like Tua, Byrd will just make him look silly."

Rahman, though, would be a different task than Tua or Lewis. While considerably taller than Tua, Rahman wouldn't bring the overwhelming size advantage into the ring for a fight against Byrd that Lewis would. Byrd would have more of an opportunity to use his entire arsenal against Rahman. He tends to slap with the jab, but he uses it enough that it is an irritant to an opponent who is trying to get inside of it. And Byrd showed against Tua that he is willing to let the left hand go, scoring point after point by sticking the left in Tua's mug.

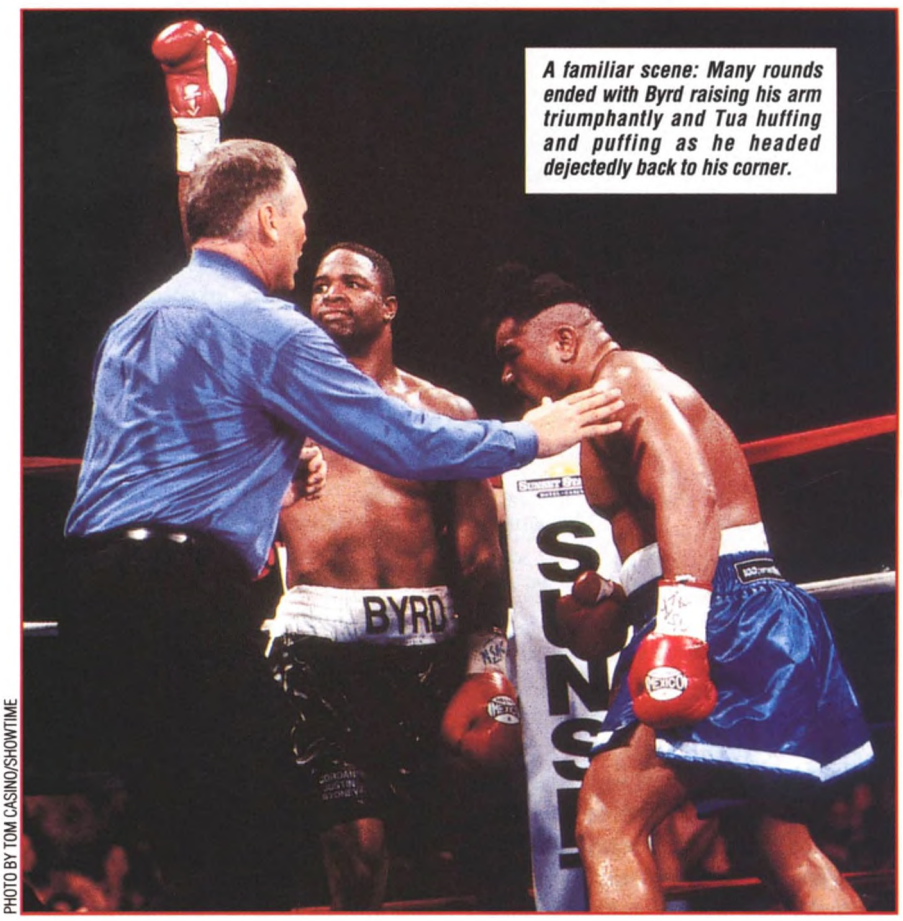
"I stayed busy, which is what I said I would do," Byrd said. "I didn't just let him come in there and maul me and have his way with me. It was the classic Ali-Frazier. He wanted to get in and throw that hook. But I could see everything coming and I would just box him and use my skills."

Tua, who offered a weak protest that he thought he had won the fight, gave Byrd a reasonable chance against either Lewis or Rahman. Tua said Byrd more than proved himself with his performance in the ring, and that it would be a mistake to look past him in a heavyweight title match.

Referee Jay Nady raises the winner's hand as Byrd's wife, Tracy, lets out a smile. Tracy said afterward that she'd like to see Chris get a major payday challenging for the heavyweight title, then retire before long.

"Chris is a great fighter," Tua said. "We kept saying that before the fight, and everyone laughed. No one wanted to act like they believed us. But we absolutely knew going in what he could do. And he's good enough to do that to any of the top heavyweights."

In fact, the top heavyweight that the Flint, Michigan, slickster might have the best chance against is Mike Tyson—and it's not impossible that "Iron Mike" is the one he'll eventually get his title try against. Tyson is the WBC's mandatory challenger, and he appears to be in line for the first shot at the Lewis-Rahman winner. If Tyson has the IBF belt by the time Byrd's mandatory is due, his Tua-like stature, diminishing reflexes, and tendency to get frustrated could play right into Byrd's hands.



A familiar scene: Many rounds ended with Byrd raising his arm triumphantly and Tua huffing and puffing as he headed dejectedly back to his corner.

PHOTO BY TOM CASINO/SHOWTIME

For Byrd, that's another thought for another day. He poured his heart and soul into his training camp, knowing that if he wasn't successful against Tua, he wasn't likely to get another chance down the road. Tua's then-promoter, Dan Goossen, said before the fight, "Chris is the kind of guy you fight only if somebody tells you you have to."

And while both Rahman and Lewis would be heavy favorites, rest assured neither man is looking forward to fighting Byrd. Byrd has more than his share of doubters, who wonder if his limited power is enough to allow him to succeed in the heavy artillery world of heavyweight boxing. Byrd, though, is not one of them.

"I'm not a puncher, but I can punch," Byrd said. "But I wouldn't go in there looking for a knockout anyway. I'll take what I have. I have a pretty good track record of success, so I'm not going to deviate from that too much."

Kevin Iole covers boxing for the Las Vegas Review-Journal and is a regular contributor to this magazine.

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A Feather In Boxing's Cap!

A CLOSE-UP LOOK AT THE SPORT'S DEEPEST DIVISION

PHOTO BY AL BELLO/ALLSPORT

By Johnnie Whitehead

At one time, Naseem Hamed sat atop the featherweight division like a much-sought-after virgin with a cast-iron chastity belt. All the suitors would line up, hoping they had the key to get inside before the clock struck 12. But when Marco Antonio Barrera knocked Naz up this past April, it caught everybody else with their pants down—and radically altered the hierarchy of boxing's deepest division.

Suddenly, everyone isn't pressing for a date with the now-tainted Prince, and talk is circling around some of the other marquee names instead. Sure, Hamed is still a valuable trophy piece and the biggest draw in the lower weight classes, but fighting him is now tantamount to scoring sloppy seconds.

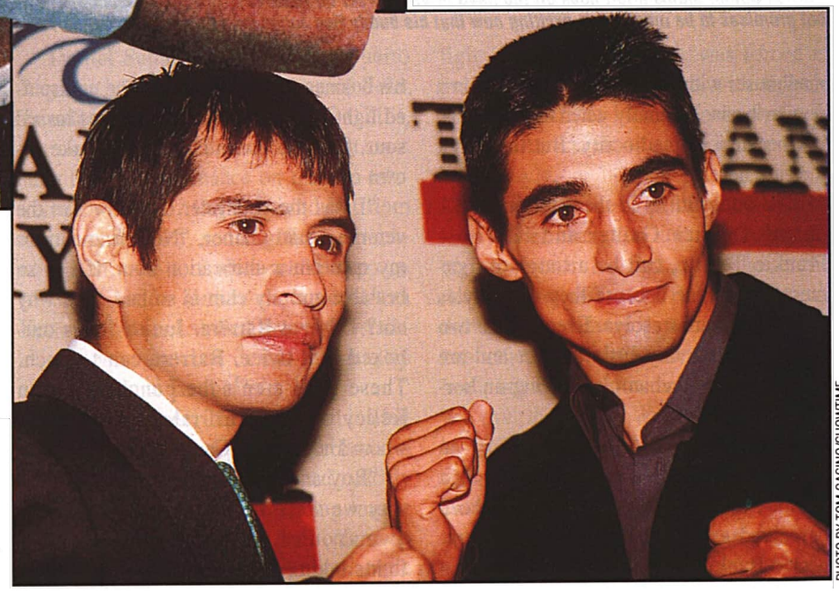
The 126-pounders have been talent rich for years, but while business backlogged at the top, the second tier closed the gap. The way things are now, the eighth, ninth, and 10th-rated contenders could conceivably knock off one of the top three. These days, everyone wants to be a featherweight.

"Part of our strategy in terms of next year is how we're going to develop the featherweight division," said HBO Sports Executive Vice President Kery Davis. "Look at the guys already there, and then look at the guys who could graduate from junior feather."

Barrera, who has been born again and is at the head of the class despite not being recognized by any of the major sanctioning bodies, is expected to fight a rematch with nemesis Erik Morales early next year in hopes of rekindling their classic 200 brawl. The book on Morales, 41-0 (31), is that he's a spent bullet ready to be taken but he's still technically undefeated and has plenty of bite for an underdog.

"This is great," said former WBC featherweight champion turned HBO analyst Kevin Kelley. "Without change there is no progress. I got bumped off and came back

When Marco Antonio Barrera upset Naseem Hamed, it changed the complexion of the talent-rich featherweight division. With Naz no longer the centerpiece, there are all sorts of opportunities for outstanding matches to be made among the 126-pounders (above).



According to HBO's Kery Davis, the next featherweight superfight will be a rematch between Barrera and WBC champion Erik Morales, probably in early-2002. Their first war was THE RING's Fight of the Year for 2000.

PHOTO BY TOM CASINO/SHOWTIME

People want to see the guy come back and how he handles adversity. Barrera came back bigger than he was the first time."

He did indeed. Barrera, 54-3 (39), was considered the heir to the throne of Julio Cesar Chavez until he suffered consecutive losses to Junior Jones in '96 and '97. After that, he disappeared for a while, refined his skills in minor fights, regained his confidence, and then reestablished himself. The questionable decision loss to Morales actually gave Barrera's reputation a huge boost, and the flogging he delivered Hamed has elevated him to hero status in Mexico. But even though Barrera currently holds down the top spot in THE RING's featherweight rankings, dozens of different featherweight scenarios are possible.

"It starts with the Barrera-Morales rematch," Davis said. "It's almost like the days with Leonard, Hagler, and Hearns. You'll get to the point where you'll see all of those matchups. There's a very good possibility, win or lose vs. Barrera, you'll see Morales vs. Hamed."

The top-flight feathers are pretty much a known quantity, but the real intrigue lies with the next level of talent. Any fighter among this group, if matched against the right guy at the right time, could win a title. In fact, the division could turn into a

PHOTO BY ANTHONY NESTE/HBO

Derrick Gainer slams a left hook off the head of Victor Polo en route to a 12-round decision. The WBA titlist wasn't very impressive in his first defens but promises to be much more exciting now that his buddy Roy Jones isn't helping him get on TV.

madhouse, with titles changing hands on a regular basis. Normally when that happens, it's because of mediocrity. But that's not the case here.

The other titlists in the division, WBA champ Derrick Gainer and IBF boss Frankie Toledo, can be a tough assignment for anyone because they have styles that can be hard to solve. Even so, the two have received very little respect and are considered to be champions living on borrowed time.

Gainer, 38-5 (24), is coming off an uninspiring points win on HBO against Victor Polo. Moreover, he has long been perceived as little more than a well-connected flunky of Roy Jones. But now that his business relationship with the undisputed light heavyweight champion has turned sour, "Smoke" sounds ready to stake his own claim.

"I was the youngster, but now I'm the veteran," said Gainer. "No one mentions my name in a unification bout. If I'm so beatable and my chin is so bad, then why not? I'd beat Barrera. Junior Jones outboxed him twice. Barrera can't punch. These guys aren't the punchers Kevin Kelley or Diego Corrales was (both of whom knocked out Gainer).

"Roy and I fight the same. That's the way we were trained. Now I'm on my own. You're going to see me in more fights taking chances. It's going to help because I'm going to have to do more. Instead of Roy saying they have to use me on the network, I got to make them say, 'I want this guy on my network.' I've got a lot to prove. Not one time did Roy Jones lace up for me. If he did, I wouldn't have five losses."

Speedy southpaw Toledo, 40-5-1 (15), upset Mbulelo Botile to win the title earlier this year simply by outworking him. Toledo's punch can cause about as much damage as a water balloon, and he was visibly shaken by the heavy-handed Botile on several occasions. The judges, however, went for volume over quality. Toledo's first defense is scheduled for November, against veteran campaigner Manuel

Frankie Toledo, who upset Mbulelo Botile to win the IBF belt, doesn't get as much respect as some of the other top feathers, but his speedy, southpaw style could give a lot of rivals serious difficulty.

Medina, who has held both the WBC and IBF featherweight belts in the past. And even though he's 30 years old and a notorious bleeder, Medina, 58-11 (25), remains a threat.

Besides Barrera, Morales, Hamed, Toledo, and Gainer, there are many other featherweights capable of energizing the division even further. For starters, here are 10 additional 126-pounders who could easily figure in the championship mix:

Johnny Tapia: Assuming he's not serious about his latest retirement, the two-division former champion, who recently scored an unlikely third-round knockout of former WBC champ Cesar Soto, is still a serious proposition for any featherweight. Sure, Tapia, 50-2-2 (27), has some mileage on him and hasn't been at this weight long, but his passion, boxing ability, and chin make him a difficult assignment for even the division's finest.

Juan Manuel Marquez: A durable, hard-punching contender whom Hamed has avoided for years. His controversial, sleep-inducing decision loss to then-WBA titlist Freddie Norwood in '99 didn't help. But Marquez, 36-2 (28), has fought his way back into contention, and was scheduled to challenge Gainer on the Jones-Julio Gonzalez card in July until Gainer was thrown off the card due to a money dispute with Jones.

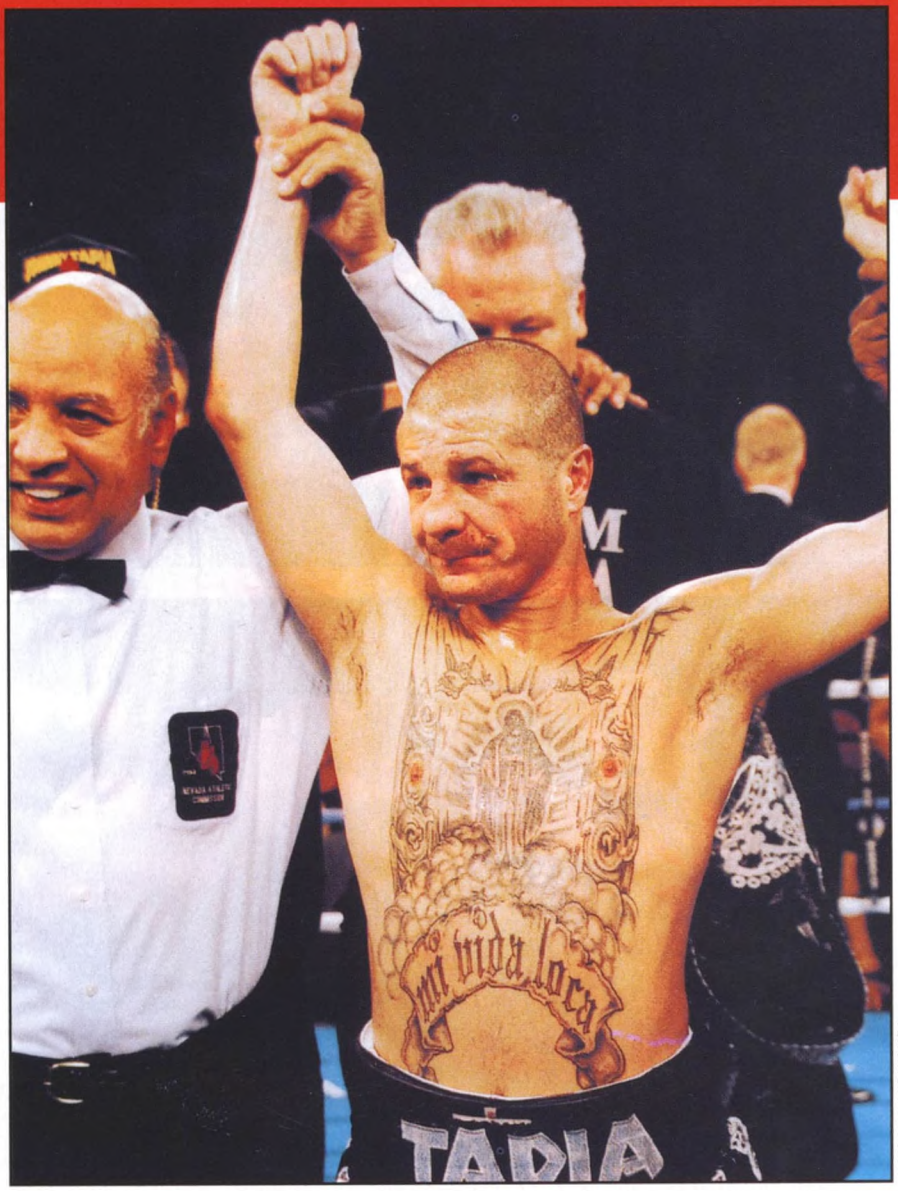


PHOTO BY SUMIO YAMADA

Providing his latest retirement threat isn't serious, popular warrior Johnny Tapia can still be a major player. His recent knockout of former WBC titlist Cesar Soto showed how effective he can be at 126 pounds.

Daniel Seda: The baby-faced Puerto Rican is a featherweight version of Felix Trinidad, and like "Tito," Seda, 17-0 (15), is trained by Papa Trinidad. He put on a scintillating performance on the non-televised portion of the Trinidad-William Joppy undercard, scoring three knockdowns en route to a ninth-round stoppage of two-division former champion Nana Konadu. Seda is a skilled, two-fisted stalker who gets knocked down, but gets up stronger. Sound familiar?

Augie Sanchez: The hard-punching but soft-chinned prospect, who gave Hamed a tough scrap before being stretched, quickly resurrected his career by drubbing former WBA bantam and WBC feather champion Luisito Espinosa in his first comeback fight. Sanchez, 28-2 (25), was forced to pull out of an August bout with Robbie Peden because of kidney stones, but will get another crack at a major title if he holds steady.

Mbulelo Botile: The skillful two-division former champion turned in a passive performance in his first title defense, the decision loss to Toledo. Botile, 27-2 (16), did the most damage, leaving Toledo with knots the size of speed bumps on his forehead, but didn't throw enough punches to win over the judges. We still don't know if his lackluster showing was an aftereffect from his previous fight—in which he knocked Paul Ingle into a career-ending coma—or just a matter of age and ring wear catching up with him.

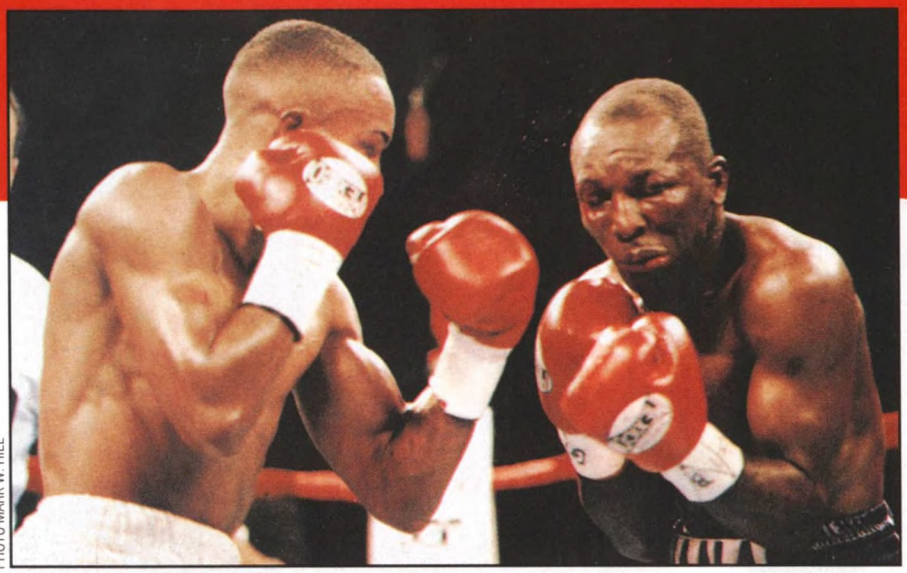


PHOTO MARK W. HILL

Among the new faces in the featherweigh division is Daniel Seda (left), pictured e route to a ninth-round TKO of Nana Konadu The undefeated Puerto Rican puncher i trained by Felix Trinidad Sr., and remind some of a smaller version of "Tito" Trinidad.

PHOTO BY TOM CASINO/SHOWTIME

Julio Pablo Chacon of Argentina, pictured en route to a win over journeyman Daryl Pinckney, holds the WBO's version of the 126-pound title. He won the belt with an upset kayo of Istvan Kovacs earlier this year, and may be targeted by the comebacking Hamed because he holds "The Prince's" former title.

PHOTO BY CHRIS FARINA

Augie Sanchez looked finished as a world-class feather after Hamed put him in the hospital, but "Kid Vegas" bounced back with an impressive knockout of former champ Luisito Espinosa (pictured), and will probably get another big fight if he keeps winning.

Julio Pablo Chacon: Although the Argentinian lost credibility when he was humiliated in a one-sided decision loss to Norwood in May '00, Chacon, 41-2 (30), recently revived his reputation by mauling prospect Istvan Kovacs to take the lightly regarded WBO belt.

Phillip Ndou: A powerpunching South African who has never been the distance, Ndou, 24-1 (24), averages less than four rounds per outing, but hasn't exactly fought a who's-who list of opponents. Still, two of his showings, a second-round slaughter of Manuel Sepeda and an 11th-round stoppage of Edgar Barcenas, came on American soil in 2000 and raised some eyebrows. And his recent knockout of the normally iron-chinned Carlos Rios impelled respected South African boxing writer Peter Moscardi to write that the emphatic victory "stamped his right to be rated among the elite of the division."

Cassius Baloyi: Another obscure South African with a solid record who has done most of his fighting abroad. Baloyi does, however, hold a decision win over Toledo, has knocked out Hector Lizarraga in a single round, and defeated past-his-prime fringe contender Steve Robinson to bring his record to 26-0 (14).

William Abeylan: Who? Guty Espadas must've been saying the same thing before he got in the ring with this little-known Armenian southpaw who had lost a decision to Lizarraga and was flattened by Polo. In a huge upset, Abeylan, 17-4-1 (9), dropped Espadas twice to take a lopsided decision over

PHOTO BY HOLLY STEIN/HBO

There are also a number of outstanding fighters currently campaigning at 122 pounds who could easily move up and enhance the already sensational featherweight division. Perhaps the most exciting is IBF champ Manny Pacquaio, pictured winning the title from Lehlo Ledwaba.

the former WBC champion, who was in line for a rematch with Morales.

Guty Espadas: Maybe he took the late-replacement Abeylan too lightly, but the upset defeat still erased much of what he'd accomplished against Morales. That was also a loss, but a controversial one. Espadas, 36-4 (22), almost knocked Morales cold with a looping right in the last round, and many observers thought he should have received the nod. Espadas is still a legitimate challenger, but it remains to be seen whether or not he has what it takes to climb the mountain again after being bounced to the bottom by a no-name opponent.

The above is a pretty daunting list, especially when you consider that it's the so-called second tier. But it doesn't end there. When you look four pounds south, there is a pack of fighters who could add even more depth.

Bones Adams and Paulie Ayala just staged a classic brawl at 122 in which Ayala received a disputed decision. But just because they've spent most of their careers at lower weights, they shouldn't be discounted as featherweight players. After all, the top two featherweights, Barrera and Morales, were junior feathers, too, when they waged their epic war.

"I'll fight anybody for money," Adams said the week leading up to the Ayala fight, frequently mentioning Morales as his preferred foil.

Ayala, 33-1 (12), and Adams, 41-4-3 (19), are expected fight a rematch, but after that, they'll probably move up and add even more star power to the featherweight ranks.

Then there's Manny Pacquiao, a former flyweight champion who surprisingly blasted out Lehlo Ledwaba this past June to win the IBF crown and become a major force at junior feather. The Filipino southpaw has a 33-2 (24) record and appears to have gotten stronger with the move up from 112, so another four pounds shouldn't hurt.

"The whole face of the featherweight division has changed dramatically," said Kelley. "I don't see anyone as a total dominator, including Barrera."

Kelley could be right, and when you have so much talent concentrated between 122 and 126 pounds, boxing fans are sure to be the ultimate winners. While nobody is in a position to demand the kind of purses Hamed made before Barrera popped his cherry, that means there will be more money to spread around—and with so many accomplished suitors lusting after featherweight supremacy, it will be money well-spent. ■

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THE 20 GREATEST FEATHERWEIGHTS OF ALL-TIME

Selections by *The Ring* Editors
Written by William Dettloff

A few years ago, fight guys who know bull when they hear it had a big laugh when Naseem Hamed said he was the greatest featherweight who's ever lived. It was a laughable notion then, even before Marco Antonio Barrera showed Hamed a little about what it means to be a fighter rather than just a puncher. How could he talk such nonsense out loud, where everyone could hear him, when some of the best fighters who have ever put on gloves fought at 126 pounds? Maybe he was kidding around; Hamed does that. It's more likely that he wasn't, that he sincerely believed, at that moment anyway, that no featherweight ever could touch him. Poor kid.

Hadn't Hamed ever read about the ethereal magic of Willie Pep, or the numbing power of Sandy Saddler? Hadn't he heard about Johnny Dundee or Abe Attell going 23 rounds like it was breakfast and then taking on welterweights the following week? Hadn't anyone told him about the chin on little Petey Sarron, or the right hand on Terry McGovern? How about the quickness and skills of Kid Chocolate or George Dixon? Did he ever open a record book and see that Freddie Miller and Chalky Wright won more fights in a couple of months than he has in his career? Hey, Prince: Ever hear of a guy named Henry Armstrong?

If Hamed were the star in some young, lame division like super middleweight or strawweight or cruiserweight, maybe he could call himself the best ever at that weight and people wouldn't shoot from their nostrils whatever they were drinking at the moment. But featherweight? Please. Its past is one of the richest in the game, its fighters among the best ever.

In this feature, THE RING analyzes and rates the 20 best featherweights in history. The criterion: longevity, consistency, caliber of opposition, big-fight performance and, in a pinch, all the little intangibles that separate heroes from mere professionals. Conjecture around who might have beaten whom—see "styles make fights"—counts too, but to a relatively small degree. Essentially it boils down to this: what the fighter got done at featherweight, how often, for how long, and against what level of competition.

One note: In contrast to previous analyses, and as a rule going forward, we have excluded from consideration any active fighters unless they have permanently moved up in weight. A fighter can't be fairly rated in a weight class until he's closed up shop there. And in case you're wondering, no, Hamed wasn't making the list anyway.

1 WILLIE PEP

229-11-1 (65)

World Champion 1942-'48, '49-'50

For the hell of it, let's assume Pep went into the tank against Lulu Perez in 1954. A lot of fight guys still think he did. For whatever reason—the mob had him, he was ticked off at his manager, he put a few thousand down on Perez at good odds, whatever. Let's go nuts and assume too, as many did at the time, that he threw the first fight with underdog Sandy Saddler, even though he lost two of three to him after that. While we're at it, penalize Pep because he couldn't do a thing with Saddler except in the second fight when he won the title back from him, and even then he took a beating in the later rounds. Take points away also for turning those fights with Saddler into bad wrestling matches, and for quitting in both of them, claiming an injured shoulder in the third match, impaired vision in the final.

Assume each of these characterizations to be sound and true. Apply them to what you know about Pep. Let them settle in. Resist the urge to debate them, despite their clear vulnerability. Assume the worst. Take it all as gospel and know anyway that they do not in the smallest sense detract one iota from Pep's standing as the best featherweight in history and one of the finest prize fighters ever to have breathed.

Maybe you like numbers. Right out of the box, Pep went three years and 62 fights without a loss. Then Sammy Angott decisioned him over 10 rounds. Pep took off on another streak: five years and 73 fights. No wonder he was a 5-2 favorite over Saddler the first time. His record was 135-1-1. He'd been the featherweight champ for six years. He'd made six defenses. It didn't matter that Saddler had been in the ring 93 times already and made mincemeat out of half of the division. This was Willie Pep. He didn't lose. He must have thrown it.

Pep didn't lose even when broken into pieces. He was in a plane crash in 1947, while he was the world champ. He was coming home from Miami when his plane went down in a forest in Millville, New Jersey. He was lucky. He came out of it with a broken leg and a couple of broken bones in his back. Of course, they said he couldn't fight anymore. He sat around for five months, took the casts off, went to the gym, and a month later whipped Victor Flores over 10 rounds. Maybe he wasn't as good as he was before the crash. He was good enough.

Chalky Wright, who appears later on these pages, won 150 prize fights. Pep beat him four times. Sal Bartolo, who beat Phil Terranova for the NBA featherweight title, won 74 bouts in his career. Pep licked him three out of three. Terranova ended a nine-year career with 67 wins, one of which was a decision over Saddler. Pep decisioned him in a title defense in New York. Paddy DeMarco owned a pair of wins over Saddler. Pep decisioned him in 10. Teddy Davis won the "interim" championship while Saddler was in the Army and was a legitimate, dangerous, top-10 guy. Three times Pep schooled him. The message: Pep fought everybody there was. He beat all of them over a career that spanned 26 years.

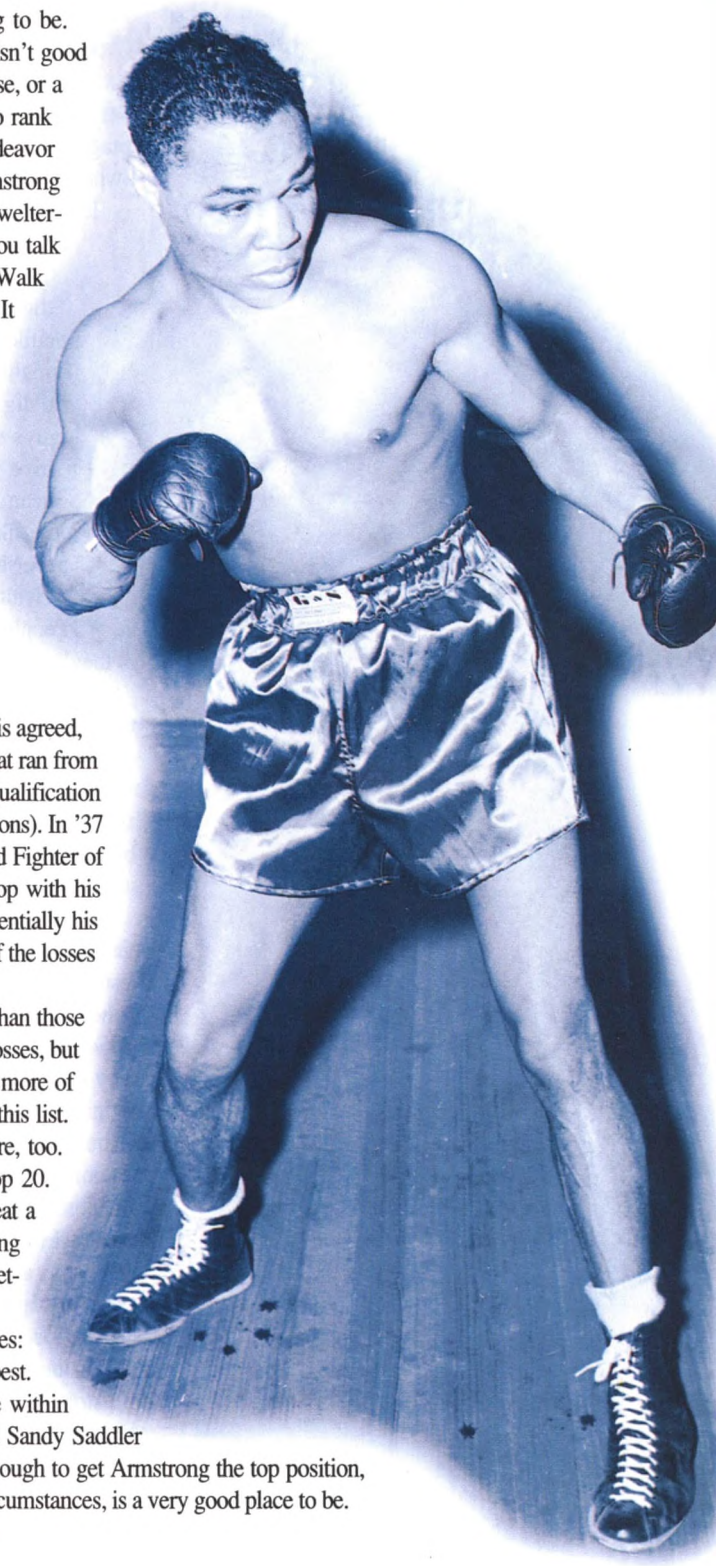
When Pep was an amateur flyweight, just a kid, he lost a decision to a another kid, a featherweight who sometimes fought under the name Ray Roberts. His real name was Walker Smith. So much developing genius in the ring that night. The mind reels.

HENRY ARMSTRONG

150-21-9 (100)

World Champion 1937-'38

2



We're taught to believe that second best isn't a great thing to be. What's a silver medal worth? Certainly in a prize fight it isn't good to be second best. Same goes for a tennis match we suppose, or a sword fight. But in a larger sense, and in any endeavor that seeks to rank and rate performers over a period of a hundred years or more, an endeavor like this one for instance, second best is damned good indeed. Armstrong already is considered by anyone worth talking to the second best welterweight ever, right behind Sugar Ray Robinson. It's understood. If you talk to someone who puts him lower than that, you're wasting your time. Walk away. If that someone puts him higher than Robinson, ask him why. It shows he's thinking, at least.

Most are happy to let it go at that, to credit Armstrong his record 19 title defenses at 147 and his simultaneous three-division championship reign and move on. But consider this, too, when judging the legacy of "Homicide Hank" and weighing his position among the all-time greats: He started as a featherweight. He fought there for eight years, the majority of his career, and scored more wins at featherweight than he did at welterweight or anywhere else. Forget that he never defended the 126-pound title, not even once. This is about rating fighters, not champions. Armstrong was as good a featherweight as he was a welterweight, and that translates to all-time great status—at 147 and at 126.

Armstrong turned pro as a featherweight—rather inauspiciously it is agreed, getting stopped in three rounds by Al Iovino—then, during a streak that ran from early-1936 to early-'38, went 47-1 with the lone loss coming via disqualification against Tony Chavez (whom he would stop on two subsequent occasions). In '37 alone, he won 27 straight, 26 by knockout, and was deservedly named Fighter of the Year by THE RING. If you start counting at his pro debut and stop with his final fight before beating Barney Ross for the welterweight title—essentially his career as a featherweight—you find that he went 88-11-6 (61). Four of the losses came in his first 16 fights, none in his final 37.

There are several featherweight greats whose numbers are better than those of Armstrong at feather, who accrued more wins and suffered fewer losses, but whom nonetheless here are rated lower. The reason? Armstrong beat more of them than any of the rest of them did. Petey Sarron appears later on this list. Armstrong stopped him in six to win the title. Chalky Wright is here, too. Armstrong bludgeoned him in three. Baby Arizmendi makes the top 20. Armstrong bested him in three out of five. Armstrong fought and beat a hell of a lot of very good featherweight fighters. He has outstanding quality to go with the quantity, about as good as it is at welter, if not better. If he's an all-time great there, he is here, too.

There's another, ancillary reason Armstrong ranks where he does: Try to name a featherweight great who would've beaten him at his best. Could Willie Pep have held off a featherweight so strong he came within inches of beating Ceferino Garcia for the middleweight title? Could Sandy Saddler have stopped a guy who was stopped twice in 180 fights? It's not enough to get Armstrong the top position, but with everything else it gets him to second best, which, in these circumstances, is a very good place to be.

3 SANDY SADDLER

144-16-2 (103)

World Champion 1948-'49, '50-'57

Sometimes a guy just can't do enough. He can be a monstrous talent, the kind that doesn't come along more than once a generation, and no matter what he does or how good he is, there's some other guy that gets the press, that gets the girl, that gets the money, that gets remembered. Saddler was a magnificent fighter, one of the best pure punchers ever, a 126-pound giant who belongs probably among the top 50 fighters of all-time. His record and legacy stand strongly on their own merits. But no one mentions his name unless they already have mentioned Willie Pep.

People like Pep. They always have. Pep was never threatening. He didn't hurt anyone. He wasn't about hurt; he was about cunning and guile. Saddler was about nothing but hurt. He came to hurt you. He might have been Sonny Liston if he were 90 pounds heavier. He lived to dig his toes into the canvas and rip off hooks and one-twos, to crack guys with his elbows on the inside, and ram them with his head, or drive his shoulder into a guy's chin. He was a tough, hard guy, and mean in that ring. One of the dirtiest fighters around. So naturally people liked Pep better, though he was no angel either. That he's white never hurt his popularity of course, but maybe it didn't matter as far as his rivalry with Saddler went.

People who don't know any better assume Pep won the series because they've heard of him and because he always lands closer to the top of lists like this one than Saddler does. But they fought four times and Saddler won three, and not by a little. Saddler almost never won by a little. When he won, which was usually, the other guy took a bad beating before getting knocked out. Hell, even when Saddler lost, the other guy got lumped up. After their second meeting, when Pep won the title back, he left the ring looking like he'd been run over by a dump truck: cuts on both cheeks and over both eyes, bruises everywhere, 11 stitches by the time the doctor was done. Not a mark on Saddler.

Of course, Pep wasn't the only guy Saddler manhandled. In 1945, Saddler went undefeated in 24 fights, scoring 17 knockouts. The following year, 13-2 with nine stoppages. The year after, 17-1-1 with 13 wins inside the distance. Generally, that's the way it went, at least before '52 when he went into the Army. Saddler averaged between 15 and 20 fights a year, 12 to 17 kayo wins, a loss or two thrown in, but never by knockout; he was stopped just once in his 13-year career, that in his second pro fight. He busted up just about every 126- to 130-pound fighter in the business, and there were plenty to go around. Injuries he suffered in a car crash forced him to call it quits in '57, a year after he struggled to stop future junior lightweight great Flash Elorde in the third title defense of his second reign. Really, he was just about done anyway.

So why, after all that, do we rate him beneath Pep? Those pesky decision losses that sprinkle his record, about one every year: to Elorde in their first match, to Del Flanagan, to Chico Rosa, to Phil Terranova, two to Paddy DeMarco. At the time they were meaningless, but placed alongside Pep's gargantuan winning streaks—and Armstrong's—they stand out, as if only to give us clear reason to place him here rather than at Pep's side. Still, we would do well, just once, to remember Saddler for all that he did, rather than just what he did with Pep.

FREDDIE MILLER

4

208-28-7 (42) with 4 no-decisions and 1 no-contest

World Champion 1934-'36

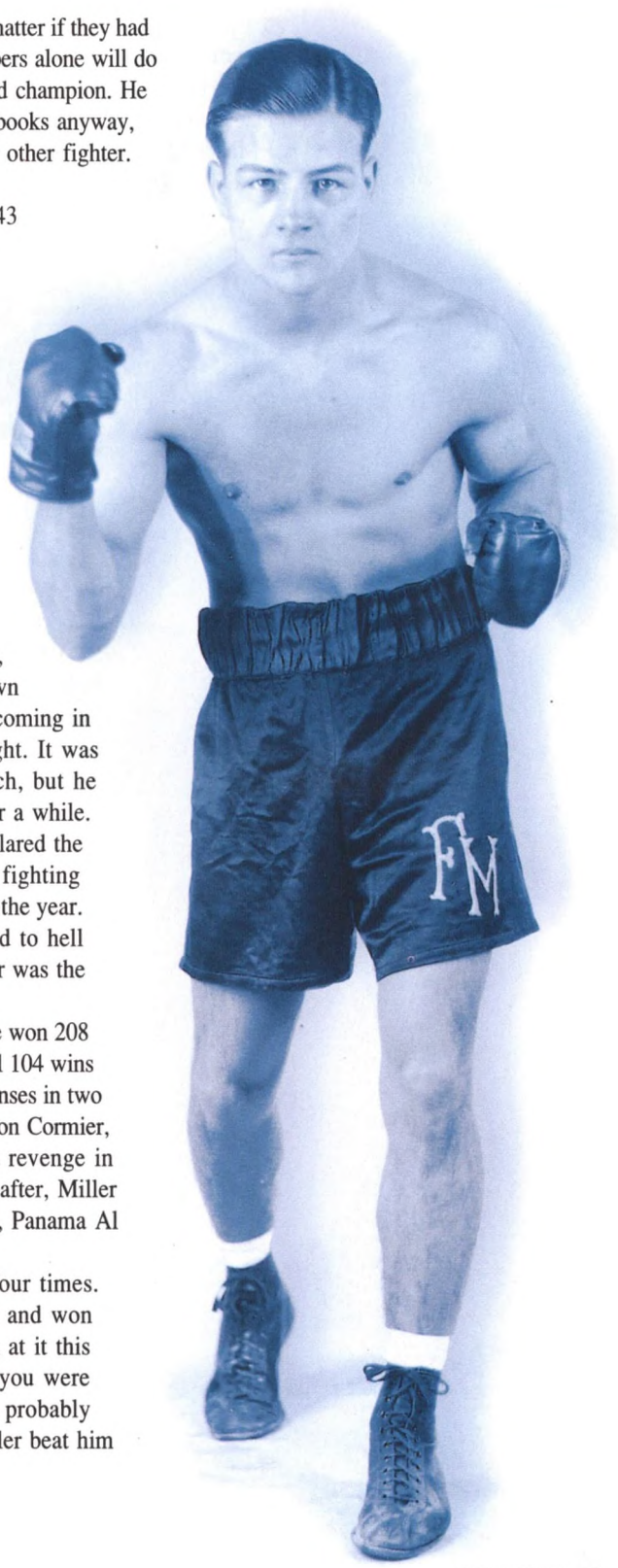
Some guys get into the record books on volume alone. It doesn't matter if they had any great talent or left a wonderful legacy. Sometimes the numbers alone will do it. Take Len Wickwar, for instance. Old Len never was a world champion. He wasn't that great a fighter, from all accounts. But he's in the record books anyway, because he had 463 professional prize fights. That's more than any other fighter. Ever.

Miller had his share, too. Not as many as Wickwar, but his 243 bouts get him into the top 10 of all-time leaders, right above Willie Pep. It doesn't sound like much compared to Wickwar, but consider this: Miller fought 33 times in 1928. In '35 he fought 35 times. Those were bumper years. Most years he went into the ring 15 to 20 times. It went up to 27 in '34, the year he won the vacant title with a decision over Nel Tarleton in England. That same year he beat future champions Chalky Wright and Petey Sarron. Sarron would return the favor and take the title from Miller two years later, but those two were always going back and forth.

By the time Miller retired in '40, he'd beaten Sarron four times out of six, and split a pair of bouts with Baby Arizmendi. He had a two-fight series with stablemate Battling Battalino, too. He lost to him for the title in Cincinnati in Miller's first title fight, and the rematch was called a no-contest after Battalino went down from a shove in the third round and refused to get up. This after coming in three pounds over the weight limit, which made it a non-title fight. It was rumored at the time to be a fix. Battalino later admitted as much, but he wasn't much of an actor, and he and Miller both got suspended for a while. The stink was so bad the New York commission and the NBA declared the title vacant, but Miller didn't care. He went about his business, fighting three times over the course of the next month, 10 more times during the year. As far as he was concerned, it never happened, and Battalino said to hell with it and jumped up to junior lightweight. Two years later, Miller was the world champ.

Don't hold that dirty affair against Miller. The record books say he won 208 times and even if half of them were fixes, and they weren't, that's still 104 wins over the best featherweights of the '30s. He squeezed in five title defenses in two years—a lot for that era—beating Jose Girones, Tarleton again, Vernon Cormier, Johnny Pena, and who else but Sarron, before Sarron finally got revenge in Washington, D.C., in '36 and took the title from him. Before and after, Miller fought everyone around: Eddie Zivic, Tommy Paul, Lew Feldman, Panama Al Brown, Red Cochrane.

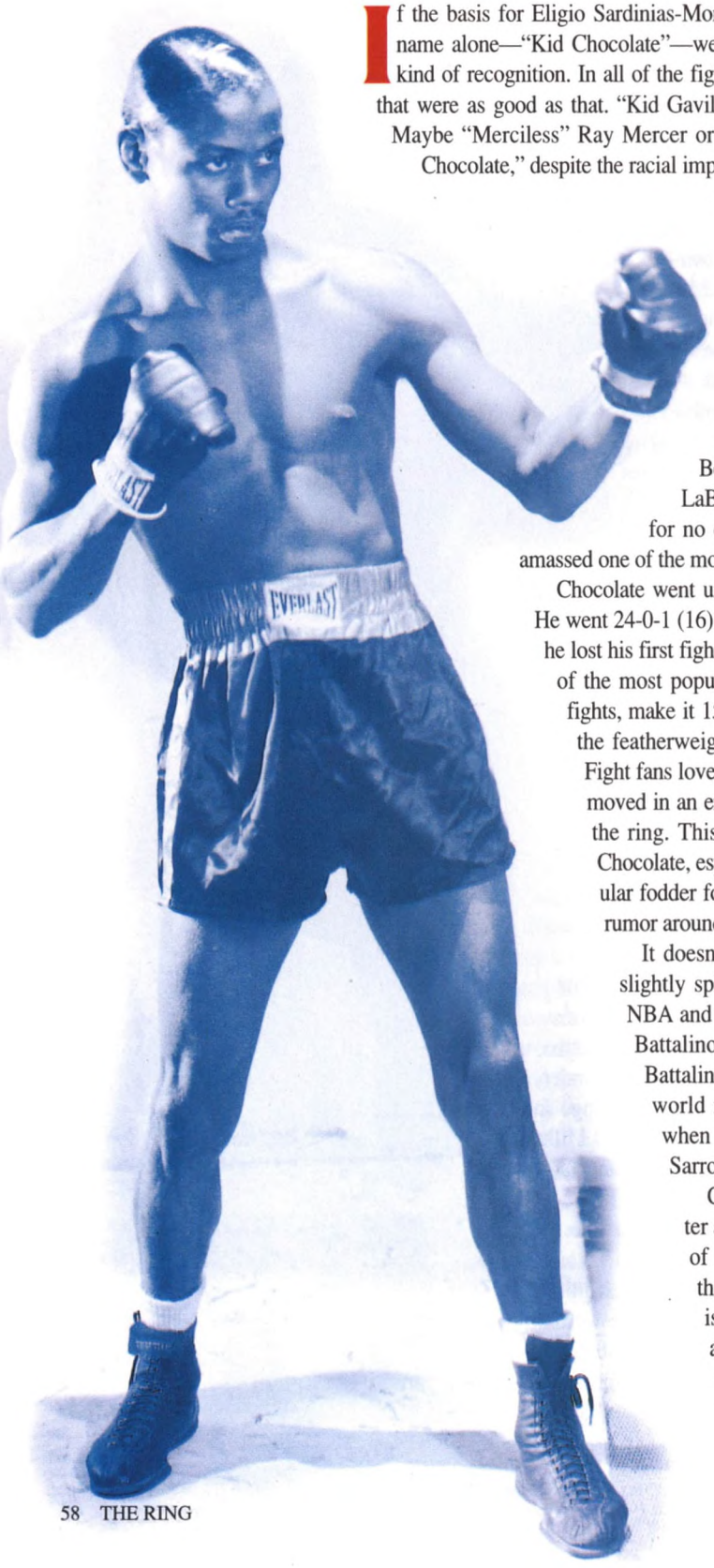
Miller fought a guy named Babe Ruth—really, Babe Ruth—four times. Same thing with Jackie—not Jack—Sharkey. Miller fought a lot and won most and was easily the most prolific champion of his time. Look at it this way: If you were a featherweight fighter between 1927 and '40, you were going to fight Miller, and very probably you were going to lose, probably more than once. That's just the way it was. Just ask Wickwar. Miller beat him in '38.



5 KID CHOCOLATE

135-9-6 (51)

New York World Champion 1932-'34



If the basis for Eligio Sardinias-Montalbo's 1991 induction into the Hall of Fame was his fighting name alone—"Kid Chocolate"—we wouldn't have argued a bit. Nicknames that good merit some kind of recognition. In all of the fight game's grand history, you could maybe think of three or four that were as good as that. "Kid Gavilan" maybe, which was really a ripoff when you think about it. Maybe "Merciless" Ray Mercer or "The Manassa Mauler" are somewhere on the list. But "Kid Chocolate," despite the racial implication, is probably the best fighting name in boxing history, and a real contender in all of sports.

The thing is, though, as good as the nickname was, that's how good the fighter was. He didn't need a great fighting name to be great. All he needed were his fists and his speed and pair of legs that could run rings around the best featherweights and junior lightweights of the era. They could go all night and they did sometimes, in victories over Benny Bass and Lew Feldman and Fidel LaBarba and Al Singer. He lost to some of the biggest names—Jackie "Kid" Berg (though controversially), Tony Canzoneri, Frankie Klick, and LaBarba in the second of their three fights—but he was easy pickings for no one, and before he started sliding a little around '33 or so, he amassed one of the more impressive winning streaks in the division's history.

Chocolate went undefeated in 100 amateur fights in Cuba, scoring 86 knockouts. He went 24-0-1 (16) in his first year as a pro, and 23-0 (10) the year after. By the time he lost his first fight, a 10-rounder to Berg in New York, he was 54-0-1 (29) and one of the most popular attractions in the game. (If you want to count the amateur fights, make it 154-0-1). Losses to LaBarba and Battling Battalino—the latter for the featherweight title—followed, but didn't diminish Chocolate's popularity. Fight fans loved not only his brilliant style in the ring and the way he boxed and moved in an era of brawlers, but also the rumors of the partying he did outside the ring. This was right after the Roaring '20s. People loved to party, and Chocolate, especially when in New York, loved it more than most. He was regular fodder for the papers and liked it just fine when they reported this or that rumor around his philandering. No publicity is bad publicity and all that.

It doesn't detract from Chocolate's accomplishments that he owned a slightly splintered featherweight title, the New York World version. The NBA and the New York Commission made the title vacant after watching Battalino, the champion, take an obvious dive against Freddie Miller. Battalino moved up to junior lightweight and Miller went on to claim world recognition, but the title wasn't officially unified until 1937 when the same New York Commission sanctioned champion Petey Sarron's defense against Henry Armstrong.

Certainly one could make the argument that Chocolate was better at junior lightweight than he was at featherweight. Indeed, many of his best victories came at 130. He also is clearly a level below the division's all-time best—Pep, Saddler, and Armstrong—and isn't nearly as accomplished. That's why they're at the very top and he's here. But he compares favorably with every other featherweight in history, and on his best night could have stayed with any of them.

JOHNNY KILBANE

50-4-8 (24) with 78 no-decisions and 2 no-contests

World Champion 1912-'23

6

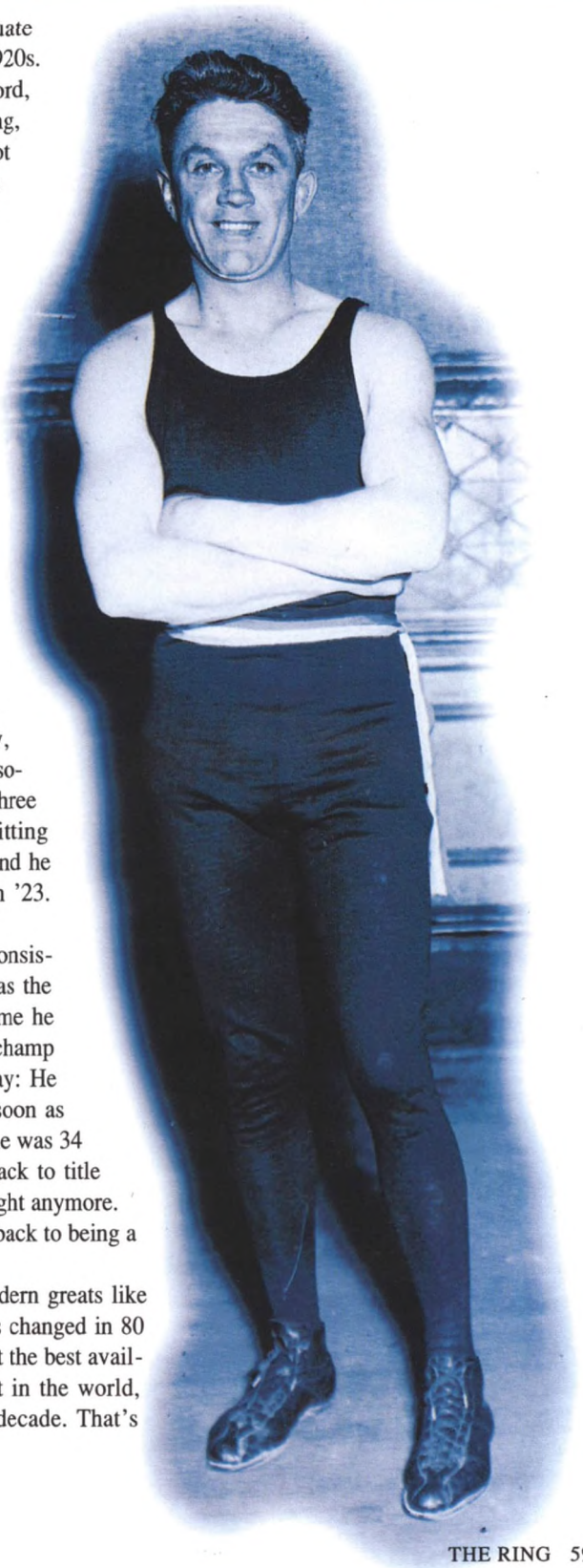
Let's face it: Unless they're icons, it's hard to accurately evaluate lighter-weight guys who did the bulk of their work before the 1920s. Jack Johnson, Bob Fitzsimmons, Stanley Ketchel, Sam Langford, and guys like them are easy. Separating legend from fact can be trying, but their greatness is readily verifiable. With the smaller guys it's not so simple. Little or no film exists of their biggest fights, and records frequently are littered with holes and questions. They're more obscure. For example, can you name the guy who was bantamweight champ the day Jack Johnson knocked out Tommy Burns? (It was Owen Moran.)

It's not so hard to verify Kilbane's credentials. First, look at the dates of his title reign. He was world featherweight champion for 11 years 4 months. That's three months shorter than Joe Louis' reign as heavyweight champion 30 years later. Kilbane's is the longest uninterrupted title reign in featherweight history and the second longest in any division, right behind Louis'. The next closest is Archie Moore's championship stay of 9 years 2 months. The Brown Bomber and The Old Mongoose. Pretty good company.

What did Kilbane do during his reign? He defended the title nine times. It doesn't sound like much, but during that same 11-year period, he fought 91 times and not against bums: Abe Attell, from whom he won the title, Joe Rivers, Jimmy Walsh, Tommy O'Toole, Johnny Dundee, Rocky Kansas, Harry "Kid" Brown, Johnny Ray, Freddie Welsh. He twice fought a young Benny Leonard, winning the so-called newspaper decision over him in '15, and getting stopped in three two years later. So it wasn't as though Kilbane kept contenders sitting around trying to get a fight with him. Again, 91 fights in 11 years, and he was inactive all of '18 and '22 and had just one sanctioned fight in '23. That's a lot of fights a year. Do the math.

Two things we all want out of our champions are longevity and consistency. Try this on: Kilbane ended up spending twice as much time as the world champion as he did as a contender (11 years to 5). By the time he retired in '23, Kilbane had fought nearly twice as many times as the champ than he had as anything else (91 to 51). Kilbane did it the right way: He decisioned Attell for the title in '12, in his sixth year as a pro. As soon as Eugene Criqui stopped him in six in '23 to win the title, when Kilbane was 34 years old, he retired. None of this trying to come back and work back to title contention. If he wasn't the champion anymore, he wasn't going to fight anymore. After being the king for 11 years, you could hardly expect him to go back to being a peasant.

We'll admit that it's difficult to picture Kilbane lasting with modern greats like Armstrong or Pep or Saddler or Sanchez or Arguello. The game has changed in 80 years and we think the fighters have gotten better, and not a little. But the best available information tells us Kilbane fought every good featherweight in the world, whipped most of them, and was a world champ for more than a decade. That's enough for us.



7 SALVADOR SANCHEZ

44-1-1 (32)

WBC Champion 1980-'82

The first time most of us got a look at Sanchez, he was beating the daylights out of our favorite television fighter. Over and over his left bounced off the square face of Danny Lopez, and with each one that landed home, "Little Red" got a little redder. We kept waiting for Lopez' right to lash out and flatten Sanchez. It had been flattening challengers on Saturday afternoons for a long time. Why wasn't it working on this guy? Lopez got him with it a couple of times, but Sanchez was cool and he darted around and went back to work with the left, reddening Lopez' face some more. Before we knew it, Lopez was done, and he did no better in the return.

That fight didn't make Sanchez great, of course. Lopez' flaws made for wonderful television. Sanchez became a great fighter gradually, quietly, by dissecting the featherweight division and, challenger by challenger, doing his best to clean it out. He was no Mike Tyson—his wins never featured jaw-dropping knockouts. He was more a dentist working a root canal; he'd probe and then poke a little, probe and pick, dart here, stab a little there, take a good close look, stab and poke again a little over here, and when he found what he was looking for, he went and got it and that was it. He picked guys apart until they wore out or opened up or gave in. Sometimes it all happened at once.

Sanchez' title challengers weren't superstars. But they were tough, competent guys who would have been tough, competent guys in just about any era: Ruben Castillo, Pat Ford, Juan LaPorte, Roberto Castanon, Pat Cowdell, Jorge Garcia, Azumah Nelson. A lot of guys said at the time that Nelson just wasn't ready for the championship level yet, that he was just a little green. It's true he gave Sanchez a better tussle than expected, but no one says that anymore, that Nelson might have beaten Sanchez had he a bit more experience under him. We guess that's because it would seem disrespectful. Nelson's a featherweight great himself now and appears on these pages, but well below Sanchez, as he should be.

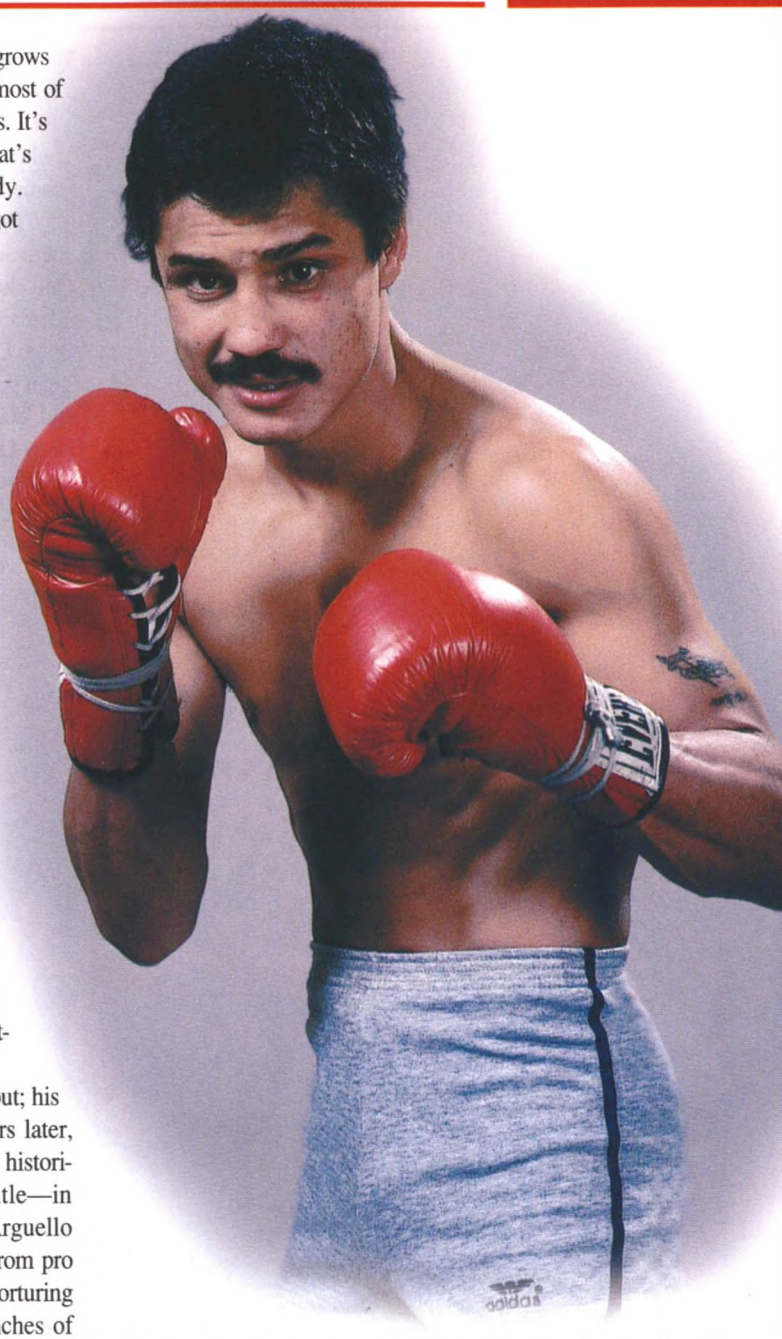
Of course, Sanchez' finest hour came during his brutal eighth-round kayo of the brilliant junior featherweight champion, Wilfredo Gomez. It's that performance, more than any other, that links him to the great ones. Gomez was an undefeated powerhouse. In a rare display of power and aggression, Sanchez annihilated him. You can say it was because Gomez was moving up if you want to, but he won Sanchez' old title a couple of years later, after Sanchez was gone. We would have liked it if Sanchez had unified the title with contemporary Eusebio Pedroza, but there wasn't time.

The temptation with champions who die young is to say they would have been greater had they lived as long as champions are supposed to—which is as long as their great hearts can carry them, we guess. If they die when they're just kids, like Sanchez did—he was 23 and brilliant when he crashed his Porsche and was killed in Queretaro, Mexico, on August 12, 1982—the sense is that all of us, meaning us and the fighter, were gypped. Maybe we were. But the years bring age as well as triumph, and what fighter gets better as he gets old? Sanchez, Stanley Ketchel, Marcel Cerdan, maybe they were as good as they were going to get. Maybe it's better that we are able to recall them only as they were when they were young and not as the aged shells of what they used to be, as it is with every other fighter. Prime Sanchez is all we'll ever know. It was a hell of a prime.

ALEXIS ARGUELLO

8

80-8 (64)
WBA Champion 1974-'76



Genius always exists before the masses know about it. It grows slowly and gets acknowledged ever slower and then, most of the time, it's half-worn by the time it gets to the masses. It's dulled by then and doesn't hold the same feel. It's special—that's clear. But it's not genius anymore. That part's gone already. We're left with the remnants because unless we got lucky and got in on it in the beginning, we missed it.

To the masses, Arguello was born a lightweight. And in his first fight of consequence, he sent brave, defenseless Ray Mancini wobbling all over our television sets, then afterward, on camera and still in the ring, praised him and kissed him like a brother. That made him a TV star. He was on television a lot before then, but only the hardcore had watched. After the Mancini fight, everyone watched. How couldn't they, a guy who was a monster during the fight and such a class act after? The problem was, Arguello's fighting genius by that time was long gone. He still was a hell of a lightweight and had the WBC title to prove it, but really, he hadn't been a genius for years. At lightweight and, later, at junior welter against Aaron Pryor and a few others, it was just remnants. The genius was at featherweight.

Going solely on win-loss numbers, you could get the impression that featherweight was Arguello's weakest weight class. He lost four times at 126—twice by knockout no less—compared to just once at lightweight (to Vilomar Fernandez), and twice at 140 (both to Pryor, and we're not including the irrelevant loss to Scott "The Pink Panther" Walker a thousand years later). He never lost a fight at 130. The figures are misleading, though. He had more than 50 fights as a featherweight, more than he had at junior lightweight, lightweight, junior welterweight, and welterweight combined.

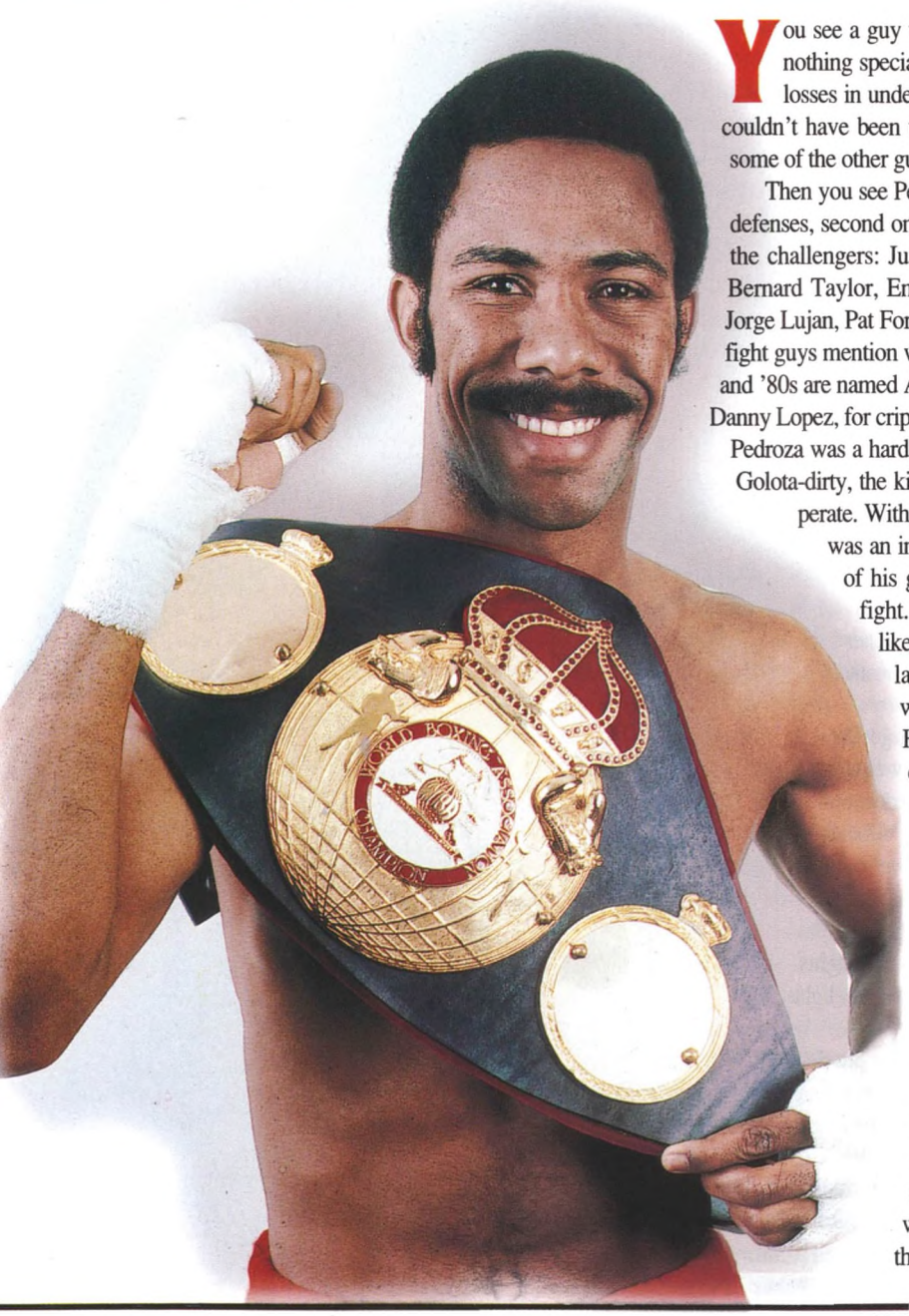
Consider this too: Arguello's first loss came in his pro debut; his next came in his fourth pro fight; the third came three years later, when he was still just 20 years old; and the fourth came at the historically underrated fists of Ernesto Marcel for the WBA title—in Marcel's backyard in Panama City, and still some said Arguello deserved the decision. Arguello's record at featherweight—from pro debut until he relinquished the title in June 1977 and started torturing junior lightweights—is 50-4 (42). He was 5 feet and 10 inches of rangy, classically schooled dynamite, and featherweights just couldn't deal with him. As he moved up, he had to work harder. He still crushed guys, but it was a fair fight at least. It was almost unjust that he was allowed to fight featherweights.

If you're still not convinced featherweight was Arguello's best weight, ask Ruben Olivares, the legendary bantamweight champ and pretty damned fair featherweight Arguello stopped cold in 13 to win Marcel's old title. Ask Leonel Hernandez, Rigoberto Riasco, Royal Kobayashi, and Salvador Torres. They're the guys he defended against. Solid guys each, and each one knocked out. Ask too Enrique Garcia and Art Hafey and Oscar Aparicio and Godfrey Stevens. More good featherweights, more good knockout highlights. Arguello had a lot of them by the time he was done, nearly 20 years and nearly 20 pounds later, but as it is with any form of genius, the best work was done early. Early, Arguello was a featherweight.

9 EUSEBIO PEDROZA

42-6-1 (25)

WBA Champion 1978-'85



You see a guy with numbers like Pedroza's and you think there's nothing special there. Just over half of his wins by knockout, six losses in under 50 fights. He got stopped three times, so his chin couldn't have been too good. For sure he's not in the same league as some of the other guys from around his time, right?

Then you see Pedroza's seven-year title reign. Then you see the 19 defenses, second only to the tainted reign of Abe Attell. Then you see the challengers: Juan LaPorte, Rocky Lockridge, Royal Kobayashi, Bernard Taylor, Enrique Solis, Ruben Olivares (albeit a faded one), Jorge Lujan, Pat Ford. Good, credible challengers. Yet the only champs fight guys mention when they talk about featherweights from the 1970s and '80s are named Arguello and Sanchez. Some of them still talk about Danny Lopez, for cripe's sake. Why doesn't anyone talk about Pedroza?

Pedroza was a hard guy to like. For starters, he was dirty. Not Andrew Golota-dirty, the kind that comes out when a guy is in trouble or desperate. With Pedroza, it was calculated. It was planned. Fouling was an important part of his offense, as fundamental a piece of his game as his jab or hook. He fouled guys in every fight. Elbows, shoulders, headbutts, low blows. It was like he practiced it in the gym. That he was so nonchalant about it, that he seemed offended that anyone would dare to complain about it, made it even worse. His response to LaPorte after LaPorte called him the dirtiest fighter he'd ever fought was, "When you're a professional, you don't cry." That was it. No denial, no rationalization. Like you were supposed to cheat. Like you were a fool if you didn't.

Sounds strange, but that Pedroza was a slow starter made it even more maddening. He already was hard to like because of the constant fouling and because he was so aloof and arrogant, and because he kept beating good, popular guys like LaPorte and Lockridge. But he was almost always behind on the cards at the midway point, almost like he was teasing us, and then he'd always come on late and dominate. He'd always get the decision too, and even if you couldn't stand him and wanted him to lose, you had to admit he deserved the nod. He could fight. You had to give him that.

Pedroza didn't have Sanchez' grace or Arguello's punch or Lopez' tenacity. He quietly and with a stone face went about beating one high-quality guy after another. His expression never changed, he never panicked, he never stepped out of character in the ring. He just did his job and he did it best when he was a champion. Before winning the title he was the nothing-special guy his record implies: knocked out by Alfonso Perez, knocked out in two by bantamweight puncher Alfonso Zamora for the title, knocked out in six by Oscar Arnal in Caracas. Then came the title win over Cecilio Lastra, and he didn't lose for seven long years, until Barry McGuigan dethroned him in England. He lost his next fight to Edgar Castro, disappeared, tried a comeback at lightweight in the early-'90s, and lost to Mauro Gutierrez. That was it, and next time someone wants to talk featherweights, give Pedroza his props. He deserves that much.

JOHNNY DUNDEE

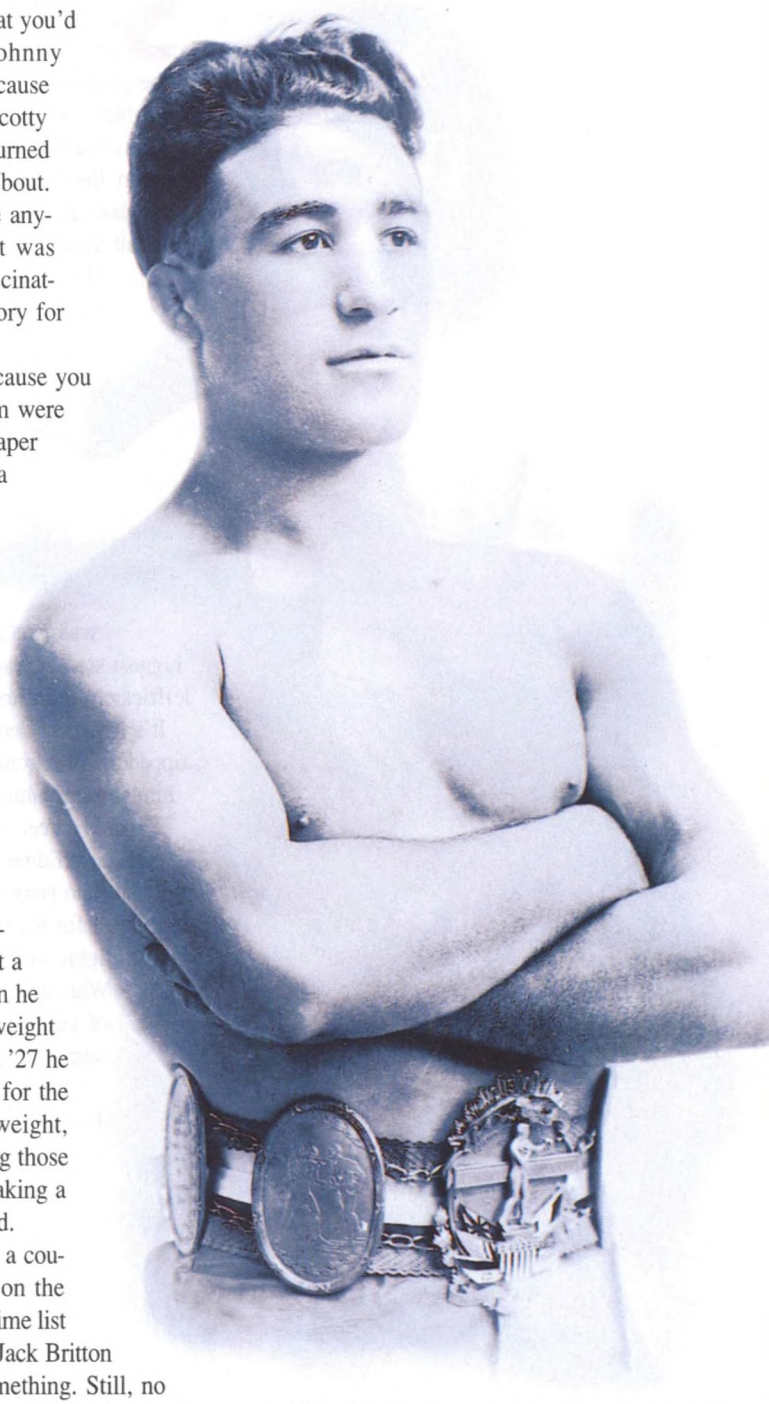
92-33-18 (22) with 194 no-decisions and 1 no-contest

World Champion 1923-'27

10

If you don't know any better, you see the name "Dundee" and you think Angelo or Chris. We guess it's better than what you'd think if you saw Giuseppe Carrora, which was Johnny Dundee's given name. (You'd think nothing, probably, because you never heard of the guy.) His manager, a guy named Scotty Monteith, gave him "Dundee" when he signed him on and turned him pro in 1910 without the kid ever having had an amateur bout. A mere 338 fights later, no one remembered his real name anymore, probably least of all the fighter. We wonder if it was Monteith too that attached to poor Giuseppe the utterly fascinating nickname, "The Scotch Wop," but probably that's a story for another time.

You know right off the bat that Dundee was special because you see Benny Leonard on his record eight times. Most of them were eight-round or six-round no-decision affairs that the newspaper guys gave to Leonard, but there's no shame in that. Plus, a lot of other good fighters from that era dot Dundee's voluminous record: Lew Tendler, Frankie Callahan, Pal Moran, Rocky Kansas, Richie Mitchell, Tony Canzoneri, Freddie Welsh, Joe Rivers. In his first shot at the world title, Dundee drew in 20 rounds with Johnny Kilbane in 1913. He didn't get another shot at the featherweight belt for nine years. When it finally came, he took advantage, knocking out Danny Frush in nine rounds to claim the New York world title. Universal recognition came a year later when he outpointed Eugene Criqui—the guy who two months earlier had ended Kilbane's 11-year reign—over 15 rounds in New York.



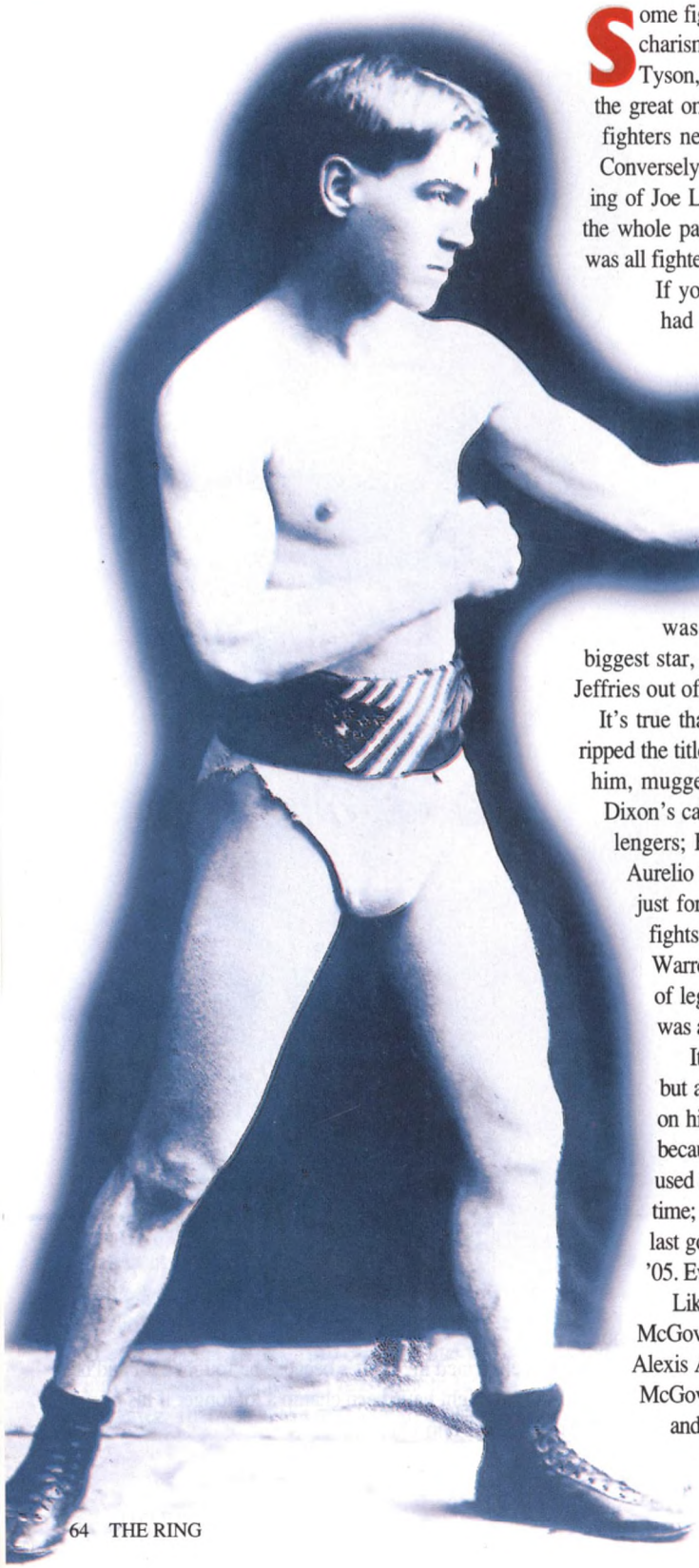
Dundee's reign as champion was unremarkable, especially compared to many of the names on this list. He made not a single official defense of the world title and gave it up when he tired of trying to make the weight. He toiled at junior lightweight for a while and a final, desperate shot at 125 failed when in '27 he was handily outpointed by the great Canzoneri in a match for the vacant belt. He continued plugging away at junior lightweight, where he'd had good success earlier in his career. But during those last couple of years, he lost as many as he won, and after taking a six-round decision over Mickey Greb in '32, he quit for good.

Dundee is another of those guys, like Freddie Miller and a couple others, who qualify as all-time greats based as much on the breadth of their work as anything. Dundee is third on the all-time list of fighters with the highest number of recorded bouts. Only Jack Britton and Len Wickwar had more, and that has to count for something. Still, no one's faxing Marty Jakubowski or Buck Smith directions to Canastota, and Dundee was enshrined in '91. It's because he fought a lot and he fought the best guys out there and when a winner was named, 92 times it was him. Plus, he might have been champ a lot longer if his prime hadn't run concurrently with that of Kilbane. Twice in 338 fights he was stopped. The numbers don't lie.

11 TERRY McGOVERN

60-4-4 (42) with 10 no-decisions

World Champion 1900-'01



Some fighters are born to be stars. They develop a swagger, a hero's aura, a charisma that others find irresistible. (Jack Dempsey comes to mind. Mike Tyson, too.) Whether or not you like them, you must watch them. Not all the great ones have it, of course. Few do. That's why some really great prize fighters never make a dime and fight their whole damn lives in obscurity. Conversely, some guys can't fight a lick, but talk like they're the second coming of Joe Louis—and get paid like it (think Shannon Briggs). McGovern had the whole package: a surly swagger and disposition that let everyone know he was all fighter, and a punch to match it.

If you were a fight fan at the turn of the century, it was simple: You had to see McGovern fight. If you were a bantamweight or featherweight contender with any serious aspirations at all, you had to fight McGovern. If you were a fight reporter, you had to cover a McGovern fight. It's just the way it was. He was huge.

It's remarkable, really, that during an age that produced such heroes as James J. Jeffries, Stanley Ketchel, and Battling Nelson, it was McGovern, the littlest of all of them, who was arguably the biggest star, at least until the country went crazy for a while and nagged poor Jeffries out of retirement.

It's true that George Dixon was over the hill already by the time McGovern ripped the title from him in 1900. But McGovern didn't just beat him; he tortured him, mugged him, floored him eight times—the first eight knockdowns of Dixon's career—and ruined him. It didn't go any better for McGovern's challengers; Eddie Santry, Oscar Gardner, Tommy White, Joe Bernstein, and Aurelio Herrera all got knocked out. In between those formal defenses, and just for the fun of it we presume, McGovern fought a bunch of non-title fights and knocked out those guys too: Jack Ward, Eddie Lenny, Tommy Warren, Frank Erne. Of course, there was the famous second-round kayo of legendary lightweight champion Joe Gans in '00 that everyone knew was a fix, but hell, even a wildcat like McGovern had his limitations.

It's true also that McGovern couldn't do a thing with Young Corbett, but all the greats have a guy like that. And either McGovern was already on his way out when it happened against Corbett, or Corbett ruined him, because he never was really the same fighter again afterward. Where he used to knock everyone out, McGovern started fighting no-decisions all the time; against Lew Ryall, against Billy Willis, against Battling Nelson. His last good win was a first-round kayo of Tommy Murphy in Philadelphia in '05. Every fight after that was a no-decision, and he quit for good in '08.

Like some of the other old-timers on this list, it's difficult to envision McGovern lasting with a modern-day featherweight like Sandy Saddler or Alexis Arguello or even a slick boxer like Salvador Sanchez. But terrors like McGovern have a way of making themselves appear bigger than they are, and with that punch, you couldn't count him out against anybody. His charisma and his power assured, McGovern left his mark on history.

GEORGE DIXON

55-26-41 (31) with 7 no-decisions and 3 no-contests

World Champion 1892-'97, '98-'00

12

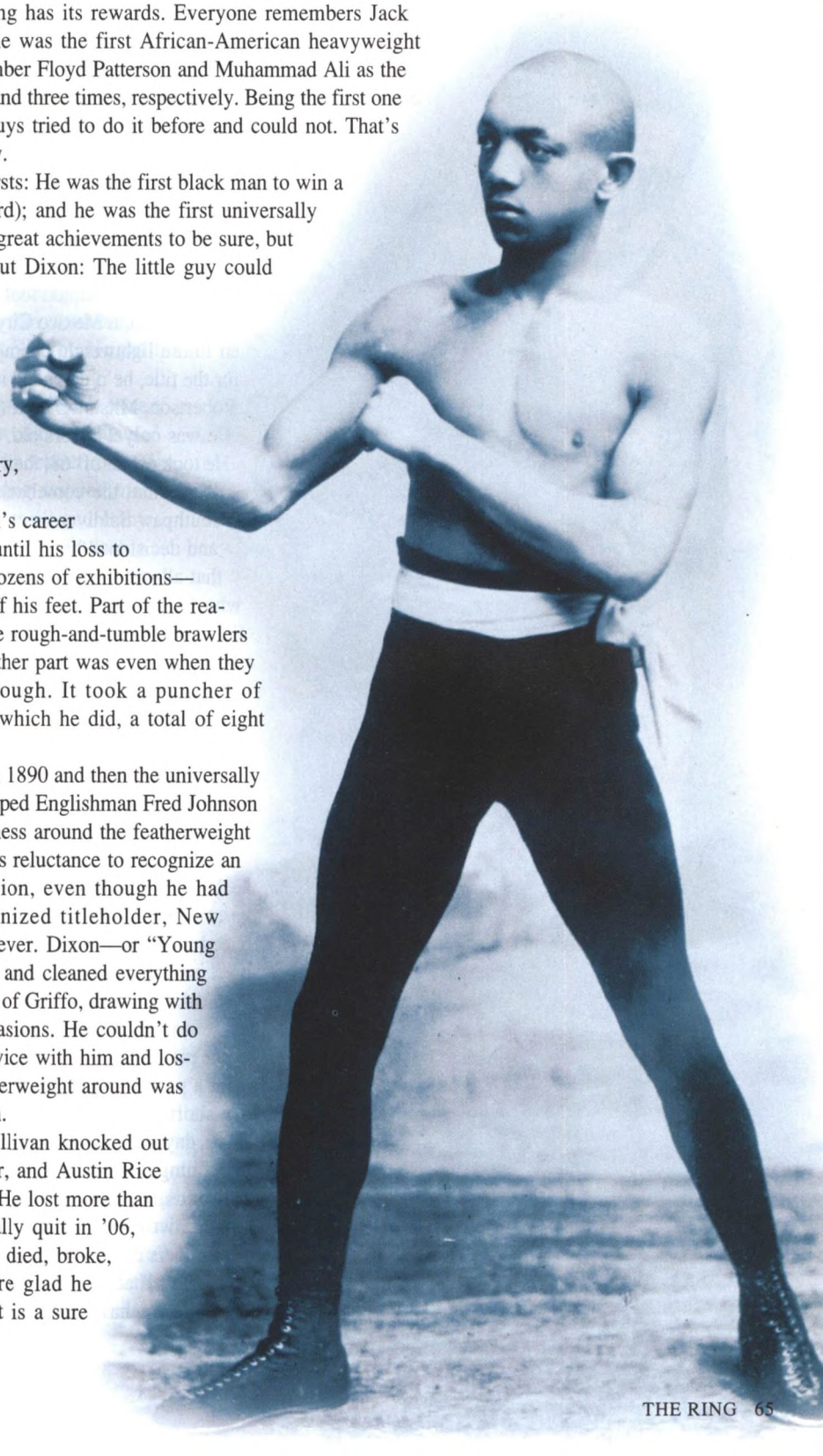
Being the first fighter to do something has its rewards. Everyone remembers Jack Johnson, at least in part, because he was the first African-American heavyweight champion. People always will remember Floyd Patterson and Muhammad Ali as the first guys to win the heavyweight title two and three times, respectively. Being the first one to do anything implies that lots of other guys tried to do it before and could not. That's what makes the accomplishment noteworthy.

Dixon accomplished two noteworthy firsts: He was the first black man to win a world title (at bantamweight, for the record); and he was the first universally recognized featherweight champion. Both great achievements to be sure, but there was something else noteworthy about Dixon: The little guy could fight like hell. Consider: Between his two reigns as featherweight king, Dixon held the title for nearly eight years. During that time he made 12 successful defenses, besting such seasoned guys as Jack Skelly, Solly Smith, Johnny Griffin, Young Pluto, Tommy White, Eddie Santry, and Will Curley.

Consider also: In the 14 years of Dixon's career that spanned from his pro debut in 1886 until his loss to Terry McGovern in '00—75 fights, plus dozens of exhibitions—he was never stopped, or even knocked off his feet. Part of the reason was he was a great little boxer and the rough-and-tumble brawlers of that era had trouble finding him. The other part was even when they found him, he could take it. He was tough. It took a puncher of McGovern's legendary pop to drop him, which he did, a total of eight times in their first meeting.

Dixon claimed the bantamweight title in 1890 and then the universally recognized featherweight title when he stopped Englishman Fred Johnson in the 14th round in '92. The prior muddiness around the featherweight title picture was due primarily to America's reluctance to recognize an Australian, Young Griffo, as the champion, even though he had soundly defeated the previously recognized titleholder, New Zealand's "Torpedo" Billy Murphy. Whatever. Dixon—or "Young Chocolate" as he was called—came along and cleaned everything up, even though he never could get the best of Griffo, drawing with him, oddly enough, on three separate occasions. He couldn't do much against Abe Attell either, drawing twice with him and losing once, but just about every other featherweight around was fair game, at least until he lost to McGovern.

After the McGovern fight, Tommy Sullivan knocked out Dixon, and Young Corbett, Benny Yanger, and Austin Rice decisioned him. It was no good after that. He lost more than he won over the next four years and finally quit in '06, about five years after he should have. He died, broke, three years after his last fight, and we're glad he achieved the firsts that he did. Being first is a sure way of being remembered.



13 VICENTE SALDIVAR

38-3 (27)

World Champion 1964-'67, '70

Always leave 'em wanting more. It's the showman's credo. It makes sense. If you leave when they're still chanting your name, you'll always have marketability. Wear out your welcome, and it's gone for good. It's a lesson fighters almost never practice. Saldivar, a gifted, mercurial, and physically imposing featherweight, came close, but eventually succumbed to the same temptation and fears that all fighters do and retired for good well after he should have. Like all fighters do.

It looked like Saldivar was going to be different. It was October 1967. Saldivar had just retained the world title for the seventh time with a 12-round stoppage of Welshman Howard Winstone, who had given Saldivar fits, more or less, just as he had the other two times they fought (both wins for Saldivar). The champion took the ring mike and announced to his shocked congregation in Mexico City that he was retiring. That was it. He'd beaten future lightweight champ Ismael Laguna, he'd beaten Sugar Ramos for the title, he'd defended it against Delfino Rosales, Raul Rojas, Floyd Robertson, Mitsunori Seki (twice), and Winstone, and he'd had enough. He was only 24 years old, but he meant it. It lasted a little over a year. He took off all of '68, then went back to the gym.

At first, the comeback was a success. Never one to dawdle, the southpaw Saldivar went after tough Jose Legra in his first fight back and decisioned him in 10 rounds. He still had that bull-like strength, that all-out attack, that steel wind. Next stop was Johnny Famechon, who had stopped Fighting Harada and claimed the WBC title while Saldivar was away. How could he do it after almost two years away and with only one fight to get rid of all the rust? Damned if anyone knew, but Saldivar did it, flooring Famechon in the eighth and taking the decision.

It would have been good enough had Saldivar let it end there. He'd lost once in his career, that by disqualification, and he was a two-time champion. But fighters don't do that, especially ones as good as Saldivar. They never leave us wanting more, and Saldivar didn't either. Seven months after beating Famechon, he was stopped in the 14th by Kuniaki Shibata, a fairly ordinary champion who would lose the title in his third defense. You'd have thought that would have convinced Saldivar, but it didn't. He took on WBC feather champ Eder Jofre in yet another comeback three years later in the '70s version of the seniors tour. It was no contest. Jofre had aged better than Saldivar, even though he was seven years older. He stopped him in the fourth, and finally Saldivar got the picture.

For a period of time, Saldivar looked unbeatable, but the time was relatively short, at least compared to others whose names appear on these pages. One day he was unstoppable, we blinked, and he was frail. Give him credit for running through the division when he did and for regaining the title against tall odds. He was a wonderful fighter, a "pocket version of Rocky Marciano," one writer called him during his heyday. He doesn't rate higher because his numbers don't compare to his contemporaries—just 41 fights total—but greatness isn't all about longevity. Sometimes it's good enough to do great things with the time you have, and Saldivar did that. That's why he's here.

CHALKY WRIGHT

150-40-15 (75) with 1 no-contest

World Champion 1941-'42

14

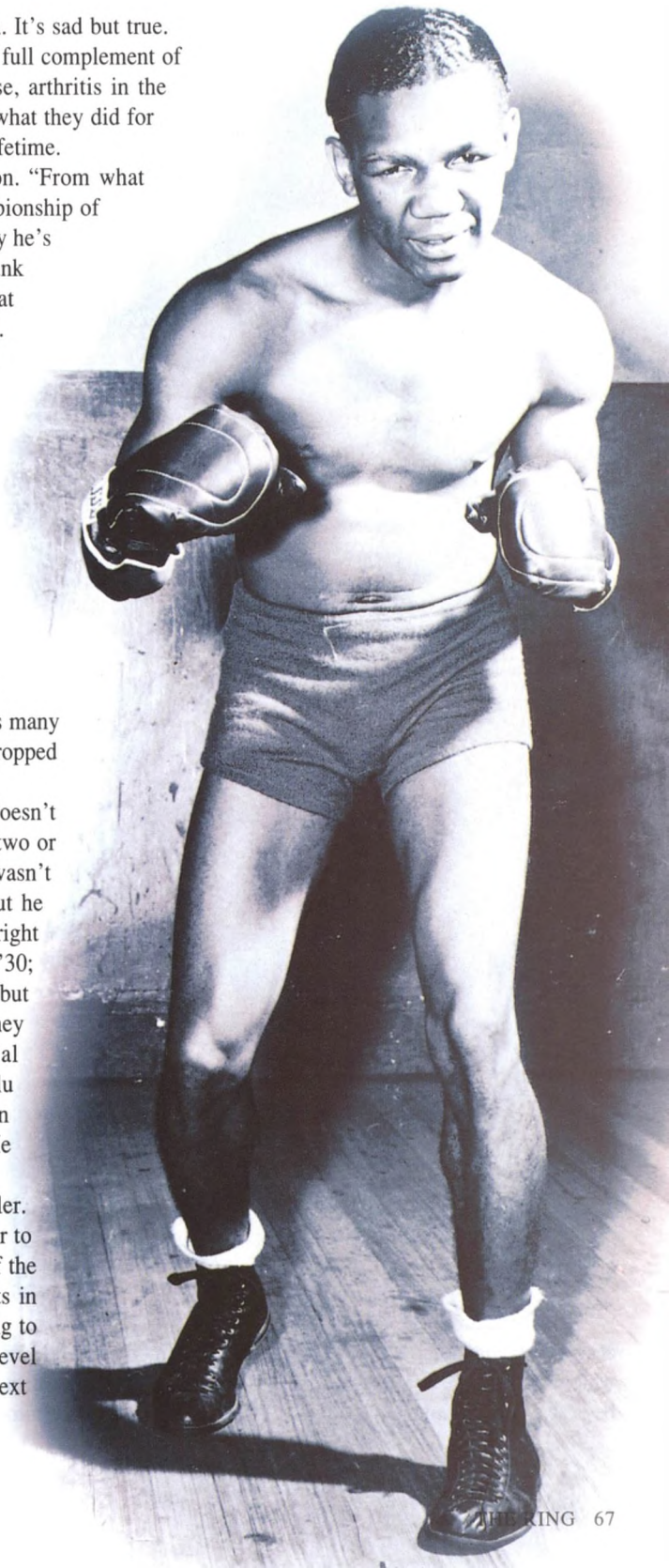
Some guys are destined to be the answer to a trivia question. It's sad but true. They fight their whole life, come out of the game with the full complement of what boxing has to offer—cauliflower ears, flattened nose, arthritis in the hands, diminished mental acuity—all so they can be defined by what they did for another guy on a single day out of a career that lasted most of a lifetime.

In a lot of corners, Wright is the answer to a trivia question. "From what fighter did all-time great Willie Pep win the featherweight championship of the world?" Answer: "Chalky Wright." Over 200 fights, and today he's just a single line on Pep's record. That's what his career was shrunk down to over the years. That's all some fighters can hope for, that people remember them at all, even if it's something that marginal. Heck, that's all some fighters deserve. They never accomplished anything else and they're okay with it. Not Wright. He put his time in. He paid his dues.

You look at Wright's record and it's easy to be deceived. He lost to just about every top featherweight of the 1930s and '40s. Pep beat him four times, the last by knockout, one of Pep's aberrations. The great Henry Armstrong stopped him in three. Freddie Miller decisioned him over 10 and Baby Arizmendi beat him twice, stopping him once. Wright lost to Enrique Bolanos, Lew Feldman, Frankie Moore, and Joey Ferrando. A lot of guys beat Wright. Of his 21 years in the ring, just two—1932 and '36—were completed without at least one loss. In every other year he lost once, twice, in some years as many as four, but not more than that. The exception is '46, when he dropped five in a row, but he was at the end then.

Now look at Wright's totals again. He won 145 fights. That doesn't happen by accident. In between all those losses, in between the two or three or four he'd drop a year, Wright was winning fights. He wasn't beating the legends of the time; that's why they're legends. But he was mixing it up with the best of the rest and beating them. Wright won 12 fights in '43; 10 fights each in '39 and '40; a dozen in '30; 11 in '32 and 19 in '41. You may not recognize all of the names, but you'll recognize some, and even if you don't it doesn't mean they weren't tough guys and good fighters, because they were: Sal Bartolo, Jackie Wilson, Joey Archibald for the world title, Lulu Costantino, Phil Terranova, Willie Joyce. Wright beat Al Brown and Frankie Gilmore and Johnny Williams and Paco Villa. He whipped a lot of good, tough 126-pound fighters.

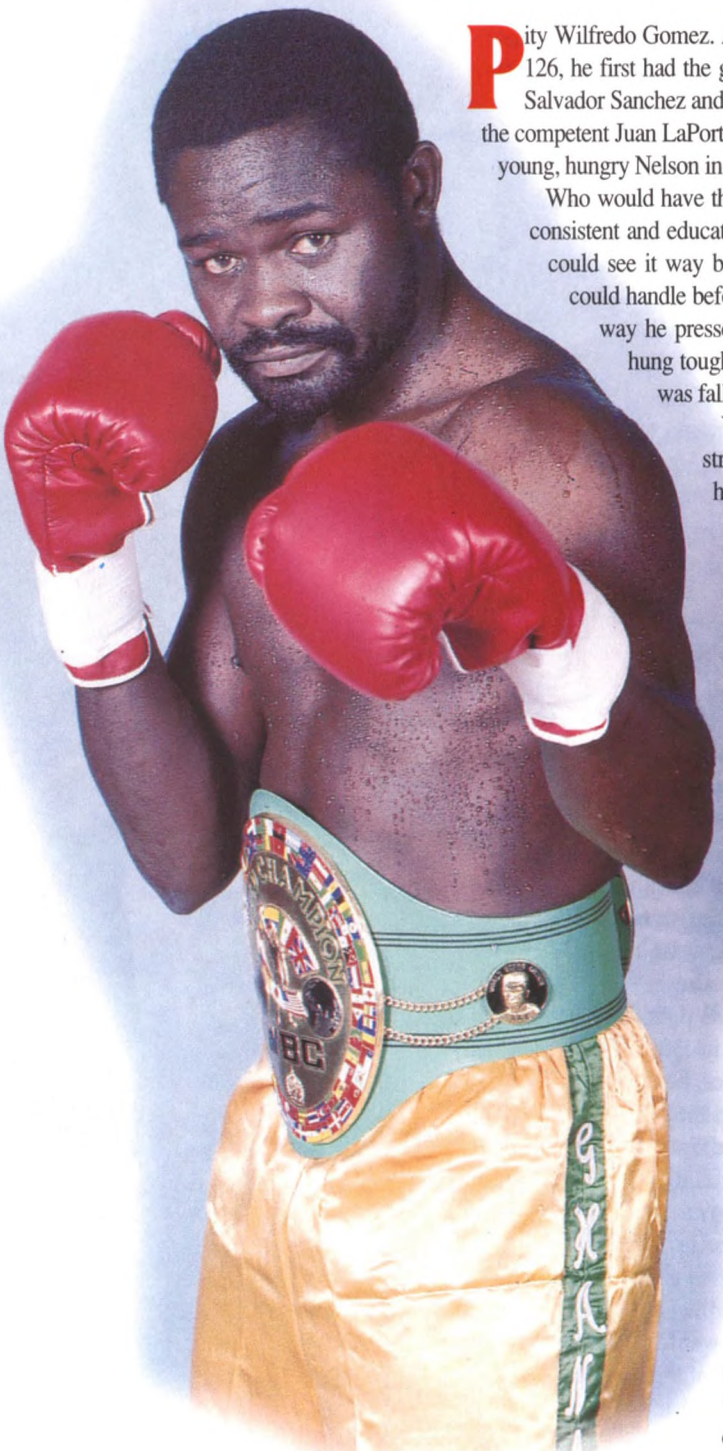
So Wright didn't beat Pep or Armstrong or Arizmendi or Miller. It doesn't mean he wasn't good, that he deserves to be the answer to a trivia question and nothing else. It means he wasn't the best of the best at a time when you couldn't fit all the great featherweights in Yankee Stadium, there were so many. There's no shame in losing to those guys or in being rated beneath them. Wright was a full level below the all-time best, but he was among the very best at that next level.



15 AZUMAH NELSON

39-5-2 (28)

WBC Champion 1984-'88



Pity Wilfredo Gomez. A wonderful junior featherweight champion who longed to rule at 126, he first had the grave misfortune of going against the superlative WBC champion Salvador Sanchez and getting crushed in eight disastrous rounds. He brilliantly outfought the competent Juan LaPorte to finally fulfill his desire and claim the WBC title, only to face a young, hungry Nelson in his first title defense. Hello canvas, goodbye title belt.

Who would have thought then that we'd see Nelson become one of the game's most consistent and educated performers over the following decade? We did. All of us. We could see it way back in 1982 when, as a 13-fight novice, he gave Sanchez all he could handle before giving out, more or less, in the 15th round. We saw it then, the way he pressed Sanchez even after getting floored in the seventh, the way he hung tough against one of the best young champions in the game even as he was falling apart in the fight's last minutes.

We saw it when Nelson followed the loss to Sanchez with six straight wins before getting the shot at Gomez. We all saw it when he attacked Gomez relentlessly, walked through his hardest right-hand counters, and calmly chased him down and beat him into defeat in the 11th. We saw it over the next three years, when Nelson defended six times the title he took from Gomez. The challengers were not spectacular, but they were solid: Juvenal Ordenes, Pat Cowdell, Marcos Villasana, Danilo Cabrera, Mauro Gutierrez, and Villasana again.

We saw that with each victory Nelson got a little craftier, a little smarter. He didn't always have to be breathing on his man, he didn't have to press and press and press. He could come forward smartly, behind a snaking jab, and when he was ready, then he could attack. "The Professor" could break down his pupils a little at a time, and then when they were ready to go, he could dismiss them with little danger to himself. He was the same kid we saw against Sanchez, but he was different. Older. Smarter. Better. The guy a lot of people thought would have done better against Sanchez if only Sanchez hadn't taken himself out of the mix.

It's blasphemy we know, but going solely by the numbers, you could make an argument for dropping Nelson to a lesser place among the greats or even removing him entirely. Over his eight-year featherweight career, Nelson had just 28 fights. That's fewer than Vicente Saldivar, the next least tenured fighter of the bunch, and around the number that Willie Pep averaged in a year. It's hard to prove longevity and consistency over a range of just 28 fights, even if 27 are wins.

On the other hand, it helps Nelson's cause that more than a quarter of those fights were title fights. Like Saldivar, he got the title early on and, in Nelson's case at least, outgrew the division and went on to capture belts at heavier weights. Did he accomplish enough at 126 to justify his placement here? He did. Nelson, a late substitution, stayed with an all-time great in Sanchez, whipped a near-great in Gomez, and made six title defenses against reasonable competition over a short period of time—three years to be exact. That's good enough for us.

PETEY SARRON

16

99-22-10 (25) with 23 no-decisions

World Champion 1936-'37

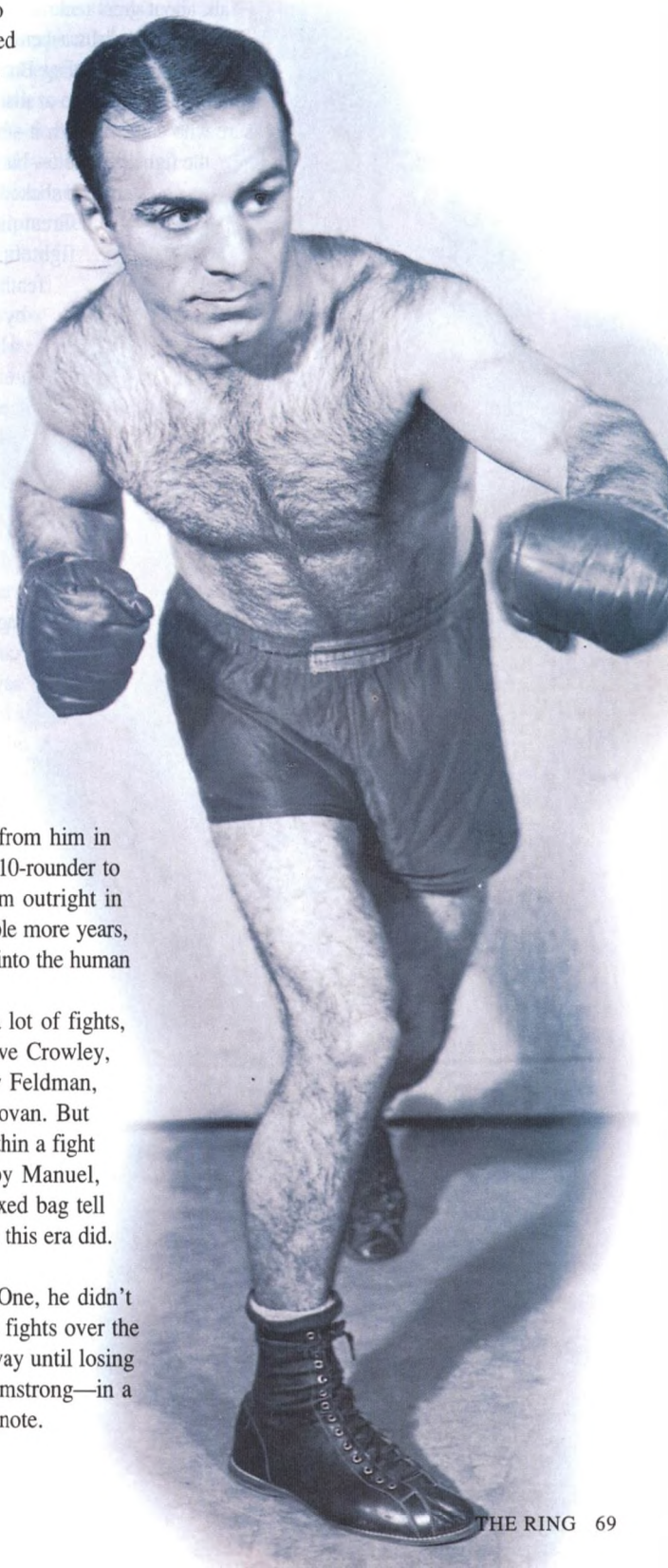
Like Chalky Wright, Sarron is best known as a guy who lost to a legend. For Wright, it was Willie Pep who forever relegated him to also-ran status, but at the same time kept him alive forever. As long as people remember Pep in any detail, they have to remember Wright, too, even if it's only as a footnote. Henry Armstrong made Sarron a footnote, when he annihilated him in six rounds in the first leg of Hammerin' Hank's championship trifecta. It wasn't like Sarron didn't fight well against Armstrong or that he couldn't in general. He was a perfectly reasonable champion who, like every other featherweight on the planet, had no business whatsoever being in the ring with Armstrong. Armstrong was too strong for him, and as it turned out he was too strong for Barney Ross and Lou Ambers and about 150 other guys.

Sarron had been around by the time Armstrong got to him. In 1925, in his very first fight as a pro, he got his jaw busted. Out of his first 19 fights, 16 were no-decisions. He lost frequently (or at least didn't get all the newspaper decisions) in those early days, but he kept plugging away, and by '31, he was mostly just winning. He put together a modest winning streak before dropping a decision to former flyweight champ Fidel LaBarba in '32, and the next year embarked on what would turn out to be an intense six-fight series with contemporary Freddie Miller.

Sarron lost to Miller the first three times they met, and you would think that would have convinced him to leave the guy alone. It didn't, though, and after that, Miller started fading just as Sarron started peaking. Finally, Sarron wrested the title away from him in Washington, D.C., in '36, and even though he dropped a non-title 10-rounder to him the following July, he came back in September and beat him outright in defense of the title. That ended the series. Miller fought only a couple more years, none too well really, and two fights after licking Miller, Sarron ran into the human buzzsaw that was Armstrong.

Sarron had something else in common with Wright: He lost a lot of fights, some to guys you never heard of: Johnny Lecky, Eddie Burl, Dave Crowley, Harry Mizler. But he lost to some good ones, too, such as Lew Feldman, Miller, Sammy Angott (in Sarron's last fight), and Tommy Donovan. But look at his record again. He didn't lose to everybody. He came within a fight of 100 victories. Some of the top-flight guys he whipped: Baby Manuel, Benny Bass (twice), Joe Rivers, Patsy Severo. What does this mixed bag tell us? That he fought everybody, just like all the featherweights from this era did. That counts for something.

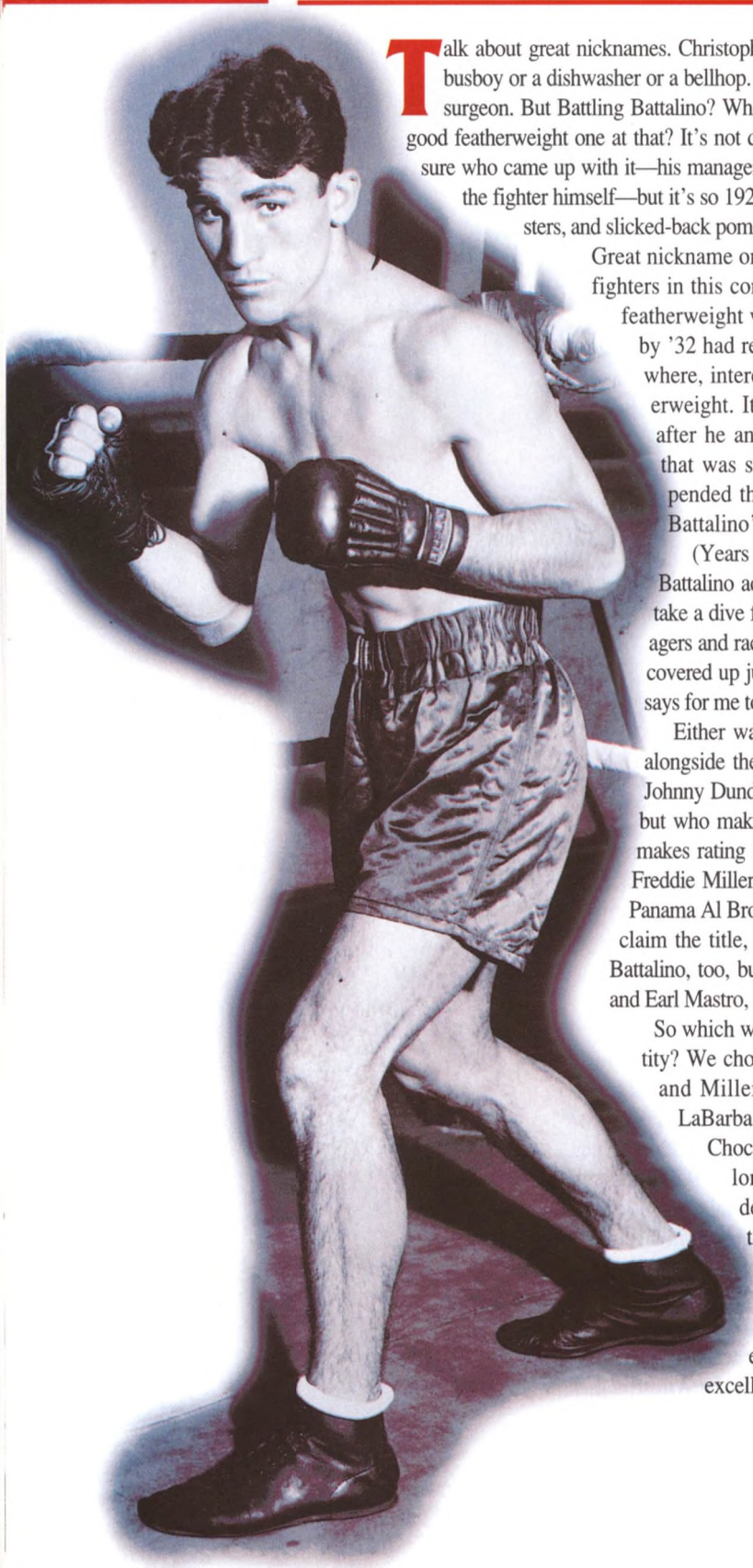
Two more things we like about Sarron, besides the 99 wins: One, he didn't just vanish after losing the title to Armstrong. He won 11 straight fights over the next two years against reasonable competition, and didn't walk away until losing to Angott in '39; and two, he was stopped just once—that by Armstrong—in a 154-fight career. That's a hell of a good accomplishment for a footnote.



17 BATTLING BATTALINO

57-26-3 (23) with 1 no-contest

World Champion 1929-'32



Talk about great nicknames. Christopher Battaglia could do anything for a living. He could be a busboy or a dishwasher or a bellhop. He could be a garbage collector or a tax collector or a brain surgeon. But Battling Battalino? What else could he be but a prize fighter, and a pretty damned good featherweight one at that? It's not quite up there with Kid Chocolate, but it's close. We're not sure who came up with it—his managers, Hy Malley and Lenny Marello, some newspaper guy, or the fighter himself—but it's so 1920s that it reeks of black and white stills, leather shoes, gangsters, and slicked-back pompadours.

Great nickname or not, there's a reason Battalino isn't among the very top fighters in this compilation, or even around the upper middle. His stay at featherweight was short. He turned pro in '27, won the title in '29, and by '32 had relinquished the belt and moved on to junior lightweight, where, interestingly, he found far less success than he had at featherweight. It may have been coincidence that the move came right after he and Freddie Miller engaged in their infamous no-contest that was so flagrantly a fix that the New York Commission suspended the two of them and promptly vacated the title. It ended Battalino's featherweight career.

(Years later, in Peter Heller's wonderful book, *In This Corner!*, Battalino admitted to throwing the fight to Miller. "I was supposed to take a dive for him, to tell you the truth. I didn't want to do it, but managers and racketeers they wanted me to take a dive. I'd get hit and be all covered up just as if I was afraid. I laid down, stretched out. The referee says for me to get up. I told him to count. He says no contest.")

Either way, Battalino's featherweight brevity hurts him when held alongside the massive numbers done by guys such as Chalky Wright, Johnny Dundee, and Petey Sarron, who clearly aren't at the top echelon, but who make up a lot of ground with volume. But here's the part that makes rating Battalino tricky: He held victories over Kid Chocolate and Freddie Miller, both of whom precede him in this analysis. He also beat Panama Al Brown, Al Singer, and Fidel LaBarba. The champion he beat to claim the title, Andre Routis, isn't especially noteworthy and that hurts Battalino, too, but he also defended successfully against Ignacio Fernandez and Earl Mastro, a pair of competent challengers.

So which way do you go with Battalino? Do you like quality or quantity? We chose both and neither, really. Yes, the wins over Chocolate and Miller carry weight, as do those over Singer, Brown, and LaBarba. But single victories alone don't justify placing him over Chocolate or Miller, who clearly got better work done over a longer period of time than Battalino did, and who were deserving of higher placement. Concurrently, we didn't think it appropriate to rate him over Dundee, Wright, or Sarron, who, although lacking wins over as many contemporaries as Battalino, doubled and tripled his total wins at featherweight by the time they were done. In the end, Battalino should be remembered for what he was: an excellent featherweight champion and one of the 20 best ever.

JIM DRISCOLL

18

52-3-6 (35) with eight no-decisions
British Champion 1907-'13

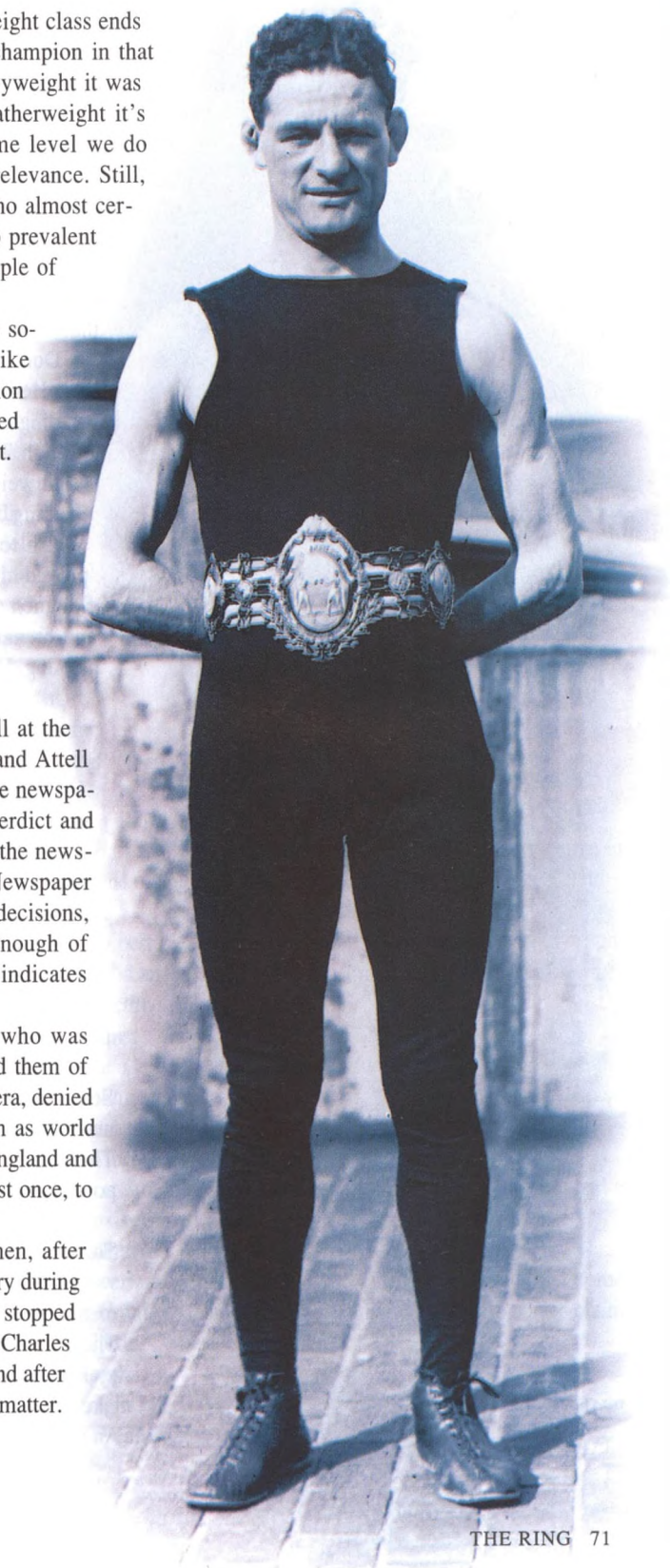
Almost any analysis of the all-time greats of a particular weight class ends up containing at least one guy who never was a world champion in that division, but was a top-20 guy nonetheless. At light heavyweight it was Ezzard Charles. At middleweight it was Charley Burley. At featherweight it's Driscoll. That's not to say we place "Peerless Jim" at the same level we do Charles and Burley; they're miles apart in terms of historical relevance. Still, Driscoll was an admired and accomplished fighter for his day who almost certainly would have won the world title if not for the chicanery so prevalent in title fights around the turn of the century and for the first couple of decades after.

Like compatriot Jimmy Wilde, Driscoll learned to fight in the so-called boxing booths scattered throughout the British Isles. Like Wilde, he took on all comers and before long established a reputation as a superior puncher as well as a quick-fisted technician. He turned pro in 1901 and quickly ran up a string of wins, mostly by knockout. Within six years, he captured the Welsh featherweight title, the British featherweight title, and the British Empire title. Along the way he beat a faded George Dixon in six rounds in London and took four of five over rival puncher Harry Mansfield. It was during his second year of fighting in America that Driscoll became acquainted with fight customs that quite probably kept him from becoming the world champion and sent him disconsolately back to the shores of merry old England.

In February '09, Driscoll met featherweight champ Abe Attell at the National Athletic Club in New York. According to Driscoll, he and Attell met before the fight and agreed that if it went the distance, and the newspaper decision went in Driscoll's favor, Attell would accept that verdict and the title would change hands. Well, it went the full distance and the newspaper guys at ringside turned in a verdict for Driscoll. (Note: Newspaper reporters were notoriously dirty when it came to rendering these decisions, and quite often the win went to the guy whose manager paid enough of them off before the bout. Still, the best available information indicates Driscoll deserved the nod.)

In the minutes after the fight, Driscoll approached Attell, who was marked up and down and looked thoroughly beaten, and reminded them of their agreement. Attell, one of the more unsavory characters of the era, denied knowledge of any arrangement between the two and continued on as world champion for another three years. Disgusted, Driscoll returned to England and fought there the rest of his career, returning to the United States just once, to fight a no-decision against Pal Moore in Philadelphia in '10.

Driscoll won the vacant European featherweight title and then, after drawing with Owen Moran in '13, did a stint with the British military during World War I. Interestingly, he attempted a comeback in '19. He stopped Pedlar Palmer, drew with Francis Rossi, then retired for good after Charles LeDoux stopped him. So no, Driscoll never was world champion, and after his match with Attell, he probably no longer cared to be. It doesn't matter. He's in good company.



19 ABE ATTELL

91-9-18 (50) with 51 no-decisions and 2 no-contests

World Champion 1903-'04, '06-'12

You would expect a guy like Attell, with 10 times as many wins as losses, to be very near the top in a discussion of the greatest featherweights ever. You would expect Attell, who made 20 consecutive title defenses—a division record—over a six-year reign (plus two in his first reign) to be in the top seven or eight, at least. On paper, his record compares very favorably with Alexis Arguello's, and Arguello breaks the top 10. Attell made 18 more defenses than Arguello did, for cripe's sake. He held the title three times as long. That has to count for something, right? So how come Attell, with this kind of record, isn't right around Arguello? Here's why: Arguello's fights were on the level. All of them. Attell? We'll never know for sure. We know a fair amount were not, and that's the problem.

Don't be misled; Attell was a great fighter. That's why he's here at all. He proved his worth over and over again, in three fights with the fading but still dangerous George Dixon. He proved it by knocking out tough Tommy Sullivan in four rounds, and by drawing with future lightweight champ Battling Nelson in 1908. He proved his worth by beating Johnny Reagan to win the title in '03, and by beating Jimmy Walsh to regain it after Sullivan stopped him in their first match. He proved his worth with wins over Harry Baker and Billy Coursey and Kid Solomon. Attell proved who he was with victories over Freddie Weeks and Frankie White and Frankie Conley and Johnny Kilbane in their first meeting. He proved a lot.

Unfortunately, Attell also proved that with the right connections and the right influence, and with the right timing, you could be champion for a long time. Twice he drew with challenger Owen Moran in fights everyone knew Moran had won. Same with Jim Driscoll, who swore to his end that Attell had agreed to give him the title if the newspaper decision went against the champion—which it did, 10 rounds to zero in some quarters. In any era that didn't feature no-decisions, Attell might have reigned for a few years. At the turn of the century, he lived on them.

Attell proved he liked to gamble and wasn't at all above dropping a fight here or there just to secure a big-money rematch, or to fight at a level or two below what he could, just so a no-decision could be rendered and the two could go in for the big-money return. He'd done it plenty of times, according to the fighter himself. A lot of the time he bet on himself and won. Some say he bet on the other guy sometimes too and won then, also, and the newspaper guys who voted for the other guy got a piece of the action as well. That's how Attell did business some of the time, and if it didn't hurt his pocketbook then, it hurts his standing today.

What if Attell had played it straight and come up with the same numbers? Then he's in the top 10 easily. But he wasn't on the level all of the time. He was some of the time, and if you doubt that, check out some of the old photos of him and Tommy Sullivan swollen up and covered in their own blood. There are more like that, that show Attell all bloody and marked up, and if you're going to throw a fight to some degree or another, you don't usually take a lot of punishment. So sometimes, Attell was on the level. It's that Attell that sneaks into the top 20.

BABY ARIZMENDI

70-26-13 (12)

New York State Champion 1934, California-Mexican World Champion 1935-'36

20

Right off the bat, you have to be impressed at what Arizmendi got done without the benefit of even a little hitting power. There are a few guys in history like that, who had no pop at all and still made it big. Harry Greb, Billy Conn, and the number-one guy on this list, Willie Pep, come to mind. Those guys are legends. Arizmendi isn't, and wouldn't be even if he had been universally recognized as a world champion at some point. It's a testament to his skill and tenacity that he did so much good business in the talent-laden 1930s featherweight division and couldn't punch a lick.

More remarkable still are Arizmendi's back-to-back wins over Henry Armstrong. He had nothing to keep Armstrong off him, but in November '34 and January '35 in Mexico City, Arizmendi decisioned him over 10 and 12 rounds. Sure Armstrong beat him three times after that, but he never was able to stop him. Armstrong stopped 27 featherweights in a row at one point, and he couldn't stop Arizmendi in the 52 rounds he spent with him.

What else did Arizmendi do? He split a pair of bouts with Freddie Miller; he beat Chalky Wright twice, once by kayo; he beat Fidel LaBarba and Newsboy Brown and drew with and lost a verdict to the same Lou Ambers whom Armstrong went to war with a couple of times. He followed Armstrong up to welterweight, but he always was just a featherweight. It's where he was at his best anyway, and his best was pretty damned good. ■

HONORABLE MENTION

The dropoff in quality from Pep, Armstrong, and Saddler to those who didn't make the top 20 admittedly is enormous, but each of the champions listed below could fight. They had two problems: They weren't Pep, Armstrong, or Saddler, and they just didn't get enough done, in some cases specifically at featherweight, to make the cut. They are listed in alphabetical order.

Tony Canzoneri

A legend at lightweight and junior welter, Canzoneri was a featherweight champ too, but didn't stay there long enough to crack the top 20.

Bobby Chacon

Chacon was more flawed than a lot of guys, but he was as tough and exciting as any little guy in history. And could he punch.

Young Corbett II

Corbett didn't beat a lot of top fighters, but he had McGovern's number, and that's enough to get him here.

Antonio Esparragoza

The big numbers aren't there, but Esparragoza made seven defenses over a four-year reign during his brief career.

Johnny Famechon

Solid numbers, a win over Jose Legra, and a pair of victories over Fighting Harada place Famechon, who fought mostly in Australia, in the lower end of the top 30.

Eder Jofre

Jofre is the best bantam ever, but he also went 25-0 at featherweight and destroyed an aged Vicente Saldivar. He might have placed higher had he not retired when he did.

Danny Lopez

"Little Red's" punch, heart, and lousy defense made him one of the most exciting fighters of the 1970s; a featherweight Matthew Saad Muhammad.

Ernesto Marcel

Marcel beat Antonio Gomez, Enrique Garcia, Spider Nemoto, and a young Alexis Arguello, and was stopped only by Roberto Duran.

Ruben Olivares

Olivares certainly was better at bantamweight, but he had some good knockouts at feather too, including one over Chacon to claim the WBC title.

Sugar Ramos

Ramos might have been a lot more had Davey Moore not collapsed and died after losing the title to him in 1963.

BACK ISSUES OF KO

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Aug. 1983: Michael Spinks: King Of The Light Heavyweights ... But The Glory Can't Erase The Sadness. Color Pinup: Johnny Bumphus. Interview: Jones & Rappaport. Also: Jones-McCrory, Pryor-Arguello II preview, world's best fighter poll, Jeff Chandler, Mark Breland, Leon Spinks.

Oct. 1983: Is Larry Holmes Finished? Color Pinup: Greg Page. Interview: Marvis Frazier. Also: Marvin Hagler, Bobby Chacon, Jack Dempsey.

Aug. 1984: WBC Heavyweight Champion Terrible Tim Witherspoon: A Superstar Of Tomorrow? Color Pinup: Rocky Lockridge. Interview: Sugar Ray Leonard. Also: Marvin Hagler, Gomez-LaPorte.

Oct. 1984: Golden Boy Mark Breland: Can He Be The Next Sugar Ray? Color Pinup: Jaime Garza. Interview: Aaron Pryor. Also: Bramble-Mancini, Sugar Ray Leonard.

Nov. 1984: Thomas Hearns: "Hagler Is Shakin' Like A Leaf On A Tree!" Color Pinup: Tim Witherspoon. Interview: Livingstone Bramble. Also: Rosario-Davis, Marlon Starling.

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March 1985: Next For Marvelous Marvin Hagler: The Only Fight That Really Matters. Color pinup: Mike McCallum. Interview: Thomas Hearns. Also: Santos-Medal, Meza-Garza, Holmes-Bonecrusher.

May 1985: Thomas Hearns: KO Fighter Of The Year. Color Pinup: Gerry Cooney. Also: Camacho-Ramirez, Truth Williams, Year In Review.

July 1985: Aaron Pryor: Has Hawk Time Run Out? Color Pinup: Donald Curry. Interview: Greg Page. Also: Ray Mancini, James Shuler, Costello-Hatcher.

Aug. 1985: King Cobra: "Hagler-Hearns Is Done And I'm Better Than Both Of Them!" Color Pinup: John Mugabi. Interview: Bobby Czyz. Also: Larry Holmes, Roberto Duran, DeWitt-Lee.

Dec. 1985: Pinklon Thomas: "Larry Holmes Betrayed Boxing." Color Pinup: Hagler-Mugabi. Also: Mike McCallum, Tyrell Biggs, Camacho-Ramirez.

Jan. 1986: Macho Mania! Hector Camacho Takes Aim At 10 Tough Targets. Color Pinup: Jimmy Paul. Interview: Alexis Arguello. Also: Truth Williams, Curry-McCrory.

July 1986: Tyson, McGuigan, Hagler: The Stars Catch Fire And Boxing Is Hot Again! Color Pinup: Azumah Nelson. Also: Camacho-Chavez.

Dec. 1986: Larry Holmes' Message To Mike Tyson: "Show Me You Can Kick My Butt!" Color pinup: Mark Breland. Interview: Holmes. Plus: Witherspoon-Bruno, Evander Holyfield, Cruz-McGuigan, Danny Lopez.

Feb. 1987: Upset Of The Decade: Has Honeyghan Cut Short The Curry Era? Color Pinup: Marvin Johnson. Interview: Bobby Czyz. Also: Edwin Rosario, Hector Camacho.

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Dec. 1987: Mike Tyson: Undisputed Heavyweight King-But Is He Losing His Loyal Subjects? Color Pinup: Matthew Hilton. Interview: Barry McGuigan. Also: Aaron Pryor, Mike McCallum.

Jan. 1988: The Collapse Of A Hero: Why Breland Never Hit The Mark Of Greatness. Color Pinup: Michael Spinks. Interview: Aaron Pryor. Also: Michael Nunn, Alexis Arguello, lightweights.

Feb. 1988: Pazienza & Haugen Go For Each Other's Throats. Color Pinup: Marlon Starling. Interview: Bob Arum. Also: Tate-Olajide, ESPN Boxing.

May 1988: KO Exclusive-Mike Tyson, As Only Mike Tyson Knows Him. Color Pinup: Mike McCallum. Interview: Thomas Hearns. Also: Tyson-Spinks Poll, Michael Dokes, Virgil Hill.

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June 1991: Exclusive KO Interview: Evander Holyfield. Color Pinup: Raul Perez. Also: Norris-Leonard, Charles Williams, champs of 1971 vs. 1991, Chavez.

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Jan. 1992: The Tyson-Holyfield Showdown: An Exclusive Forecast By George Foreman. Color Pinup: Myung Woo Yuh. Also: Fenech-Nelson, TV announcers, boxing's toughest men, Toney-McCallum.

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Dec. 1992: The Final Four: Ruddock vs. Lewis, Holyfield vs. Bowe. Color Pinup: Genaro Hernandez. Interview: Lennox Lewis. Also: Whitaker-Pineda, Bowe-Coetzer, Alex Stewart, Gamache-Lopez.

Jan. 1993: Holyfield vs. Bowe: Who Will Win and Why. Color Pinup: Al Cole. Interview: Vinny Pazienza. Also: James Toney, Terrence Alli, Maurice Blocker.

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Dec. 1993: The KO Feud Rages On: "I Will Torture You!" Says Riddick Bowe To Lennox Lewis. Color Pinup: Kennedy McKinney. Also: Mississippi boxing, George Foreman, Yori Boy Campas , Carbajal-Kim, Morrison-Moorer.

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August 2001: Sugar Shane Mosley: Too Sweet For The Bad Boy Era? Interview: Richard Steele. Plus: Evander Holyfield, Roy Jones, Jesus Chavez.

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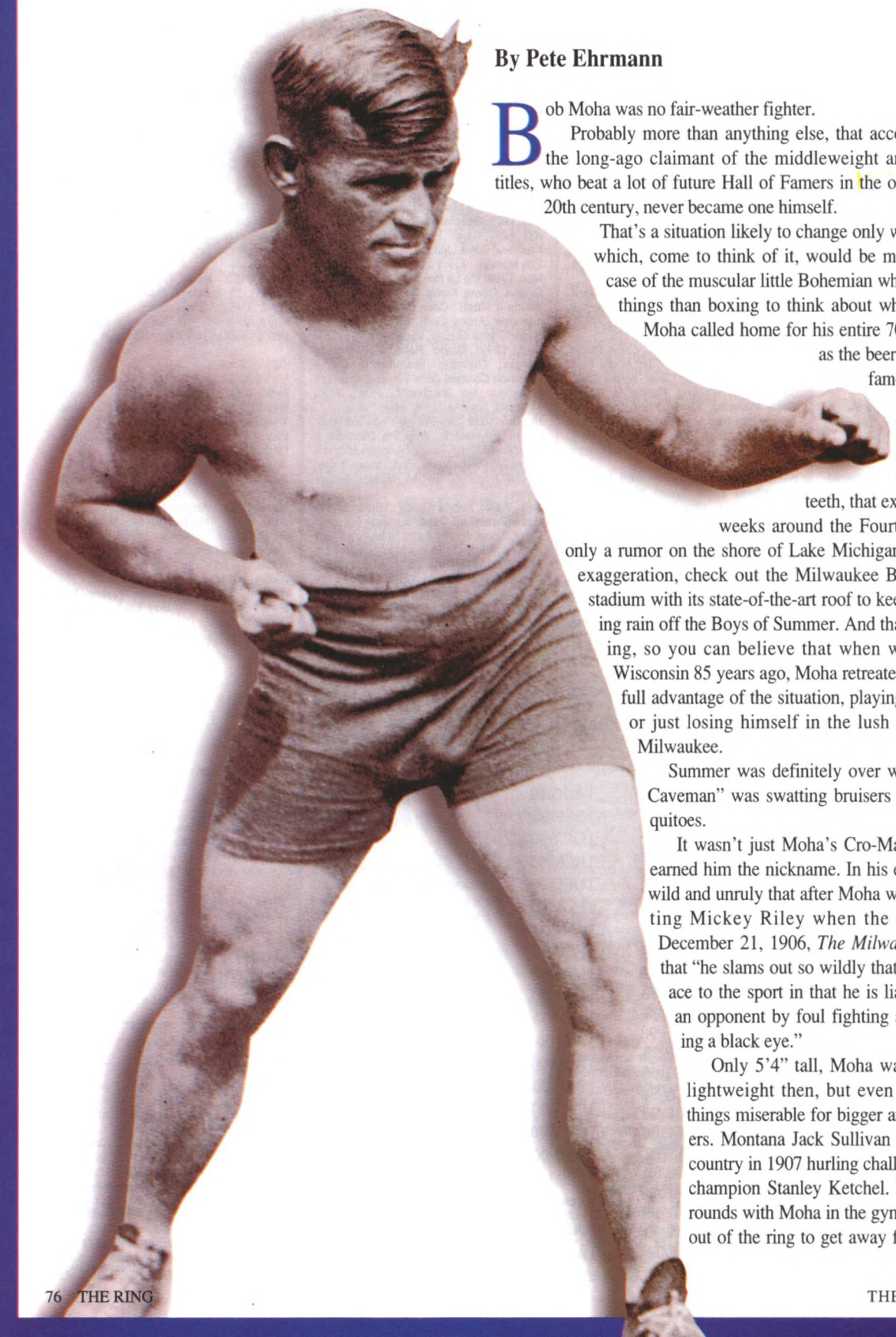
"CAVEMAN" BOB MOHA

"The White Walcott" Missed Out On His Time In The Sun



By Pete Ehrmann

Bob Moha was no fair-weather fighter.

Probably more than anything else, that accounts for the fact that the long-ago claimant of the middleweight and light heavyweight titles, who beat a lot of future Hall of Famers in the opening decades of the 20th century, never became one himself.

That's a situation likely to change only when hell freezes over, which, come to think of it, would be most appropriate in the case of the muscular little Bohemian who usually found better things than boxing to think about when the climate where Moha called home for his entire 70 years wasn't as cold as the beer that made Milwaukee famous.

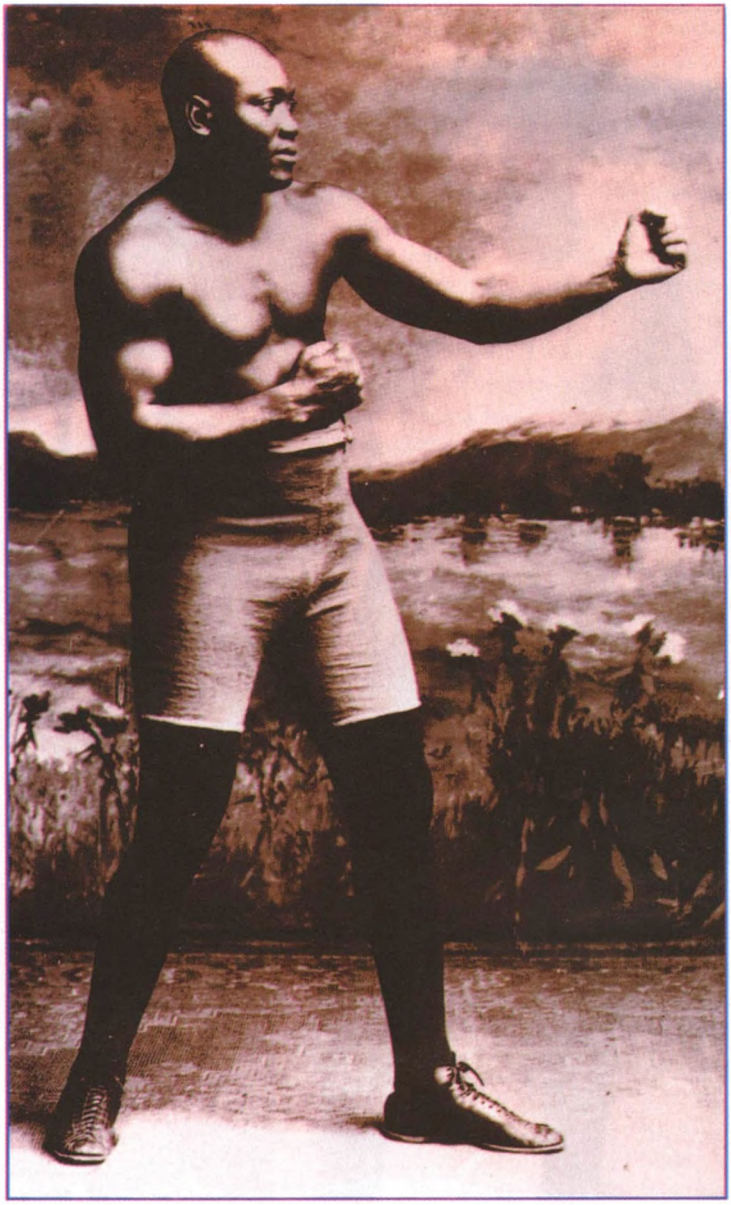
Veteran denizens of Wisconsin's largest city will testify, through chattering teeth, that except for a few fleeting weeks around the Fourth of July, summer is only a rumor on the shore of Lake Michigan. If you think that an exaggeration, check out the Milwaukee Brewers' new baseball stadium with its state-of-the-art roof to keep the snow and freezing rain off the Boys of Summer. And that's with global warming, so you can believe that when winter retreated from Wisconsin 85 years ago, Moha retreated from the ring to take full advantage of the situation, playing baseball, swimming, or just losing himself in the lush lake country west of Milwaukee.

Summer was definitely over when "The Milwaukee Caveman" was swatting bruisers again instead of mosquitoes.

It wasn't just Moha's Cro-Magnon appearance that earned him the nickname. In his early fights, he was so wild and unruly that after Moha was disqualified for hitting Mickey Riley when the latter was down on December 21, 1906, *The Milwaukee Journal* worried that "he slams out so wildly that he is a constant menace to the sport in that he is liable to severely injure an opponent by foul fighting and thereby give boxing a black eye."

Only 5'4" tall, Moha was barely more than a lightweight then, but even in the gym he made things miserable for bigger and better-known fighters. Montana Jack Sullivan was going around the country in 1907 hurling challenges at middleweight champion Stanley Ketchel. But after a few fierce rounds with Moha in the gym, Sullivan literally ran out of the ring to get away from him. Around that

Future lightweight champ Ad Wolgast was in for an unpleasant surprise when he bragged that he would knock out Moha in a sparring session. Instead, it was Wolgast who ended up seeing stars.



After sparring with Moha, heavyweight champion Jack Johnson was so impressed, he wanted to manage the Milwaukee slugger. But Moha preferred to stay at home, so they never formed a partnership.

same time, Ad Wolgast, swarming his way to the lightweight title and then headquartering in Milwaukee, put out the word that he would knock Moha out in an impending sparring session. Instead, it was Wolgast who ended up seeing the black lights, and when the poster boy for ring durability woke up, Moha told him: "Be careful how you talk about me hereafter, Ad."

Wolgast had a pal, another well-known hardcase of that era called Indian Joe Gregg. He publicly vowed to avenge Ad when he sparred with Moha the next day. Gregg spent three days in the hospital after the Caveman worked him over.

Nothing like that happened when Jack Johnson worked with Moha in 1909, but for the next few years, every time the heavyweight champion came to town, newspapers reported that Johnson wanted the Caveman to leave with him to fight under his management.

But not even that could pry Moha loose from his home base, where, by unwritten law, the boxing season ran from fall to late-spring, thus enabling him to take his pick of the offers from semi-pro clubs bidding for his services on the baseball diamond. "Moha is one of the fastest infielders in the city, saying nothing of his ability as a batter," reported the *Milwaukee Free Press*. "Many a game was broken up through some of his mighty clouts."

Future welterweight title claimant Jimmy Clabby was hailed as the boxing wonder of the age. But Moha basically used him for fungo practice in their 10-round no-decision match in the spring of '10. The Caveman, reported the *Free Press*, "pounced upon Clabby like a terrier going to a bone." It was his most impressive and important performance to date, and a natural springboard to bigger and better things. But Moha signed to play shortstop for the summer instead, and didn't put the padded mitts back on until fall.

After getting the better of a no-decision

Moha got the better of several fighters who would go on to earn legendary status, including Billy Papke (left) and Jack Dillon (above). After beating Papke, Moha claimed the middleweight championship, but few took his claim seriously.

bout with former welterweight champ Mike "Twin" Sullivan early the next year, Moha was scheduled to face another fast-rising Midwesterner named Jack Dillon in Indianapolis. The Milwaukee man sprained an ankle playing handball—another favorite pastime, which Moha always played barefoot—and asked for a postponement. Too late for that, said the Indy promoter, and when Moha showed up on fight day, he was at least 10 pounds over the stipulated weight of 154 pounds. Dillon refused to go ahead with the match, so the Caveman shrugged and went with his manager and a Milwaukee physician to a restaurant around the corner. The fighter was just mopping up after a huge steak and potatoes meal when Dillon and the promoter rushed in to announce that the fight was back on.

That didn't appall the Caveman half as much as his doctor friend's suggestion that he pump Moha's stomach before he entered the ring.

"You mean you want to get that steak and potatoes out of me?" The Caveman howled. "Nothing doing! Think of what a job I had getting it down."

Moha had a harder job, under the circumstances, coping with Dillon, who of course had spied on him in the restaurant and then decided to go through with the fight, figuring the heavy meal would make the squat visitor a sitting duck in the ring. Even so, it was close, unlike a rematch a few months later in Buffalo when a trim Moha put the future light heavyweight champion on the floor several times in another no-decision bout.

Since the murder of Ketchel in October 1910, just about everybody weighing near the division limit, which was 158 pounds at the time, anointed himself middleweight champion. That included Billy Papke, who'd traded the belt back and forth with Ketchel in a trio of championship fights and figured with Ketchel out of the picture it automatically reverted back to him. A surprising number of fight experts went along with him, but then furiously backpedaled from that position after Papke and Moha put on a truly scary performance on Halloween Night, 1911.

The Caveman at least had the excuse that he broke both hands early in the 12-round match. What Papke's problem was, nobody knew (later his brother would call it "Australian fever," contracted in an earlier trip Down Under). With Moha unable to hurt Papke and Papke unwilling to try to hurt Moha, the crowd at Boston's Armory Club kept itself awake by jeering from the fourth round on. After about two minutes of the final round had elapsed, members of the audience climbed on their chairs and perversely started chanting, "Don't ring the bell! Don't ring the bell!" Siding with them, timekeeper Billy LeClair deserted his ringside post, and over seven minutes passed before somebody gonged the sorry mess to a close.

"The Milwaukee Caveman" dressed up in his fancy duds during a visit to New York City. Even though he stood only 5'4", Moha beat numerous light heavies and heavyweights.

Moha was the decision winner, and his followers proclaimed him champion. But in fact the match had been made at a catchweight, not 158, and the winner himself acknowledged the flimsiness of his new mantle by pronouncing himself "willing to meet any of the other boys who feel they have a claim to the championship ... because I want to clinch my right to it beyond question." Oddly enough, 10 years later Moha would decide that not only had he been middleweight champion after all, but took a page from Papke's book and announced that "since then I have not fought around that weight, so I never lost the crown."

That was a hoot, but the reaction to the Caveman's invasion of New York in 1912 was anything but. "The White Walcott" is what critics called him after Moha won a newspaper decision over Sailor Burke on March 21, and followed up two weeks later by knocking out Jim Smith in eight. That was some compliment, since the black Walcott—Joe, "The Barbados Demon," who was welterweight champion in the first decade of the century—was considered one of the ring's all-time greats.

"Moha is a wonder among the middles," wrote Bob Edgren, who described him as, "short and stocky, built something on the lines of a steamroller. He had short arms as thick as the average man's legs. His back is broad and his shoulders wide and chest deep. His round, wide-jawed head is connected to his trunk by a neck as thick as [wrestler George] Hackenschmidt's."

As if that didn't paint a formidable enough picture, Edgren added that Moha "seldom smiles, and when he does his smile is more appalling than his scowl."

Former heavyweight champion James J. Corbett called Moha "the sensation of the hour in New York," and remarked that "a month ago very few Gotham sports fans knew such an individual existed, in spite of the fact that [Moha] has been before the public in a professional capacity for five or six years, and has the credit of a victory on points over Billy Papke. Now the Easterners are raving about the Milwaukeean and touting him for the middleweight championship."

Two months later, nobody knew where Moha was. After a few more appearances in the Big Apple, The White Walcott returned home in June and promptly became downright invisible. Offers for bouts with Papke, Frank Klaus, and Georges Carpentier died on the table because nobody could find Moha, who'd typically decided to take the summer off. When finally tracked down, Moha said that after the hard work he'd put in all winter, he was entitled to a long vacation.

It lasted until the following January, when the overweight Caveman reported back to the gym to melt himself down to 170 pounds for a February 17, 1913, fight in Milwaukee against "Cyclone" Johnny Thompson. Thompson had also once beaten Papke for recognition—at least when he looked in the mirror—as middleweight champion. And, also like Moha, his days as a middleweight were behind him. So their fight was sanctioned and advertised as a contest for the 175-pound "commission weight" (later the light heavyweight) title recently created by the New York boxing commission.

Moha won the newspaper decision, but the general attitude toward his new title was summed up in the *Milwaukee Free Press* the next day: "This morning Mr. Moha is a world's champion, if that gets him anything." It would be another year before the light heavyweight division, moribund since

the reign of Philadelphia Jack O'Brien in 1905, got on firm footing gain, with the cunning Jack Dillon gaining wide recognition as champion.

For the duration of his career, which went until 1922, Moha was either the brilliant White Walcott again, as when he whipped middleweight title claimant Eddie McGoorty and future light heavyweight titlist Battling Levinsky with breathless ease (both were officially no-decisions, but all agreed Moha won), or looked like he'd just crawled out from under a rock. Or, more likely, off a chuckwagon.

Two months before he fought middleweight contender Mike Gibbons on December 14, 1914, the 24-year-old Moha reportedly weighed 245 pounds. But he worked out frantically, even boxing 12 rounds in the gym the day before the fight in Hudson, Wisconsin, to get down to 160 and show everybody he was ready to make a run at the title again.

He ran, all right, only it was for the door after Moha drilled the Minnesota "Phantom" south of the beltline with an uppercut in the second round that sent Gibbons to the floor and one of Gibbons' handlers after Moha with a chair. Disqualified, Moha had to borrow train fare home because the promoter refused to pay him his $944.77 purse.

More upset about that than anything else, Moha sued the Hudson Boxing Club all the way to the Wisconsin Supreme Court. In a landmark decision issued two years after the bout, Chief Justice J.B. Winslow ruled against the Caveman on the ground that he had "contracted to box 10 rounds under certain rules," one of which (no fouling) "he violated ... and as a result thereof disabled his opponent, and this, by his own act made substantial performance [of his contract] impossible. Whether this act was deliberate or not cuts no figure. It was an act which he had contracted not to do and it prevented performance."

Two months after that, Moha tried to take it out on Gibbons' brother Tommy, but with Mike sitting at ringside loving every minute of it, the younger Gibbons, who would eventually challenge Jack Dempsey for the heavyweight title, dished out what the *Milwaukee Sentinel* called "the worst licking of Moha's life" in winning an easy newspaper decision. "Moha has stopped many

After impressive outings against Sailor Burke (pictured) and Jim Smith in New York, critics began calling Moha "The White Walcott," which was about the biggest compliment that could be given a fighter in those days.

punches in his ring life," said the *Sentinel*, "but never so many at one time."

It was an uppercut thrown by former middleweight champion George Chip a month later, on March 12, 1917, that accomplished what nobody else in about 100 professional bouts ever managed against the Caveman. The punch, which landed flush on Moha's jaw in the fourth round, staggered him, and the referee stopped the fight. Moha's alibi was that he'd spent too much time in a Turkish bath the night before, trying to sweat himself down to the 163-pound contractual limit.

"I can whip any boxer in the world today from 158 pounds to 230 and up," Moha said. He was never loathe to try, either. Joe Cox, who'd once stopped Jess Willard before Willard became heavyweight champion, stood two heads taller than the Caveman and had about 70 pounds on him. But the sawed-off Milwaukeean wowed a New York crowd by shellacking Cox over 10 rounds in 1916. Moha had trouble reaching Cox's head, but the big guy's ribs ached for weeks afterward.

It took future Dempsey foe Billy Miske 10 rounds to earn a newspaper decision over Moha, and it's significant that in several meetings the Caveman gave Harry Greb all he could handle. Yet interestingly enough, considering the notable series he had with Greb, Dillon, Levinsky, and other big names of his era, Moha's most bitter rival was a middleweight who lived just kitty-corner from him on North Breman Street in Milwaukee. Gus Christie split two grudge matches with the Caveman.

"His arms appeared long in contrast with the rest of his body," Christie recalled upon Moha's death on August 4, 1959. "When he came out of his corner and started to move those arms, it looked like three pairs of fists coming at you all at the same time."

Walter Houlehan briefly managed Moha, but was more notable as one of the country's top referees who saw close up most of the great fighters of that time. "Moha was the best in America in his day," Houlehan said in his published memoirs.

That may be a slightly biased judgment, but the fact is that, at his best, Moha was good enough to make it hot for anyone. Trouble was, on his hottest days, The Milwaukee Caveman preferred to be doing something else. ■

Pete Ehrmann is a freelance writer based in West Allis, Wisconsin, and a regular contributor to this magazine.

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Road Work . . . Christy Martin, Paul Spadafora (L), and Livingstone Bramble enjoy race.

Go . . . Ken Norton officially starts race of celebrity boxers and runners.

INDUCTION CEREMONY

A Moment in Time . . . Ismael Laguna (L) on induction bandstand while George Benton (R) poses in museum moments before Induction Ceremony.

BOXING CARD SHOW

A Collector's Dream . . . Boxing memorabilia for fans. The world's only all-boxing show draws collectors from throughout the world.

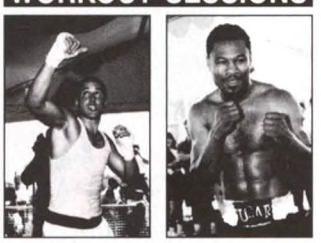
GOLF TOURNAMENT

Putt . . . Jimmy Ellis (L) chips on 18th green and Juan LaPorte (R) poses with golfers.

VIP COCKTAIL RECEPTION

Stars . . . Marvelous Marvin Hagler and Hector "Macho" Camacho pose for reception guests, while Angelo Dundee (R) receives red carpet welcome.

WORKOUT SESSIONS



Paul Spadafora and Sugar Shane Mosley work out for the public on Museum grounds.

RINGSIDE TALKS

Reminiscing. . . Alexis Arguello (L) reunites with Ruben Olivares (R).

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SUMMARY

HEAVYWEIGHTS

Chris Byrd W 12 David Tua
Fres Oquendo KO 11 Obed Sullivan
Oleg Maskaev KO 6 Brian Nix
Cliff Etienne KO 1 Ken Murphy
Ron Guerrero KO 7 Terrance Lewis
Lawrence Clay-Bey W 8 Agustin Corpus
Corey Sanders KO 9 Wolfgramm
Nate Jones W 6 Antonio Colbert
Ahmad Abdin W 8 Richie Jero
Anton Nel KO 1 Jokkie Oberholzer
Tye Fields KO 1 Jeff Ford
Kelvin Davis D 6 David Vedder
Malik Scott KO 2 Ron Brown
Calvin Brock KO 2 Rocky Gannon
Calvin Brock KO 1 Lewis Gilbert
Michael Bennett KO 1 Wes Taylor
Billy Zumbrun W 4 Butterbean

CRUISERWEIGHTS

Vassiliy Jirov KO 8 Julian Letterlough
(Retains IBF Title)
O'Neil Bell KO 11 Arthur Williams
Jean-Marc Mormeck KO 1 Vinson Durham
Pietro Aurino W 10 Paolo Ferrara
Vincenzo Cantatore KO 8 Joe Siluvangi
Jesper Kristiansen KO 5 Robert Zlotowski
Joey DeGrandis KO 2 Tyrone Mack
Tim Williamson KO 4 Kenny Snow
Daniel Judah KO 3 Michael Alvarez

LIGHT HEAVYWEIGHTS

Jorge Castro KO 8 Peter Venancio
Danny Batchelder KO 4 Thomas Cameron
Troy Weaver KO 1 Konstantin Semerdjiev
Fred Moore KO 5 Kwan Manasseh
Tony Oakey KO 4 Konstantin Ochrey
Max Heyman KO 4 Francisco Stevens
Max Heyman KO 2 James Green

SUPER MIDDLEWEIGHTS

Sven Ottke W 12 James Butler
(Retains IBF Title)
Markus Beyer W 8 Glenn Odem
Syd Vanderpool KO 5 Shannon Miller
Anthony Mundine W 12 Sam Soliman
Aaron Norwood KO 1 Roosevelt Walker
Will McIntyre W 6 Charles Daughtry
Brian Magee KO 6 Chris Nembhard
Dafir Smith W 4 Ken Kerry
Jerson Ravelo KO 1 Alex Armenta
Jeff Lacy KO 1 Anthony Greeley

MIDDLEWEIGHTS

Raul Marquez KO 7 Roberto Baro
Dwain Williams W 10 Pat Coleman
Emil Baku W 10 Ron Weaver
Bobby Heath W 8 Michael Covington
Peter Manfredo Jr. W 4 Rhon Roberts
Jermain Taylor KO 5 Efrain Garcia

JUNIOR MIDDLEWEIGHTS

Vernon Forrest KO 4 Edgar Ruiz
(Non-Title Bout)
Antonio Diaz KO 5 Oscar Delgado
Kassim Ouma W 10 Verno Phillips
Rodney Jones KO 3 Robert West

PHOTO BY MIKE GREENHILL

PHOTO BY TOM CASINO/SHOWTIME

Super middle prospect Jeff Lacy cracks Anthony Greeley with a right

PHOTO BY MIKE GREENHILL

Nate Campbell absorbs a right hand en route to beating Victor Abadia

Jason Papillion W 10 Michael Lerma
Santiago Samaniego KO 7 Javier Castillo
Nader Hamdan W 12 Wayne Parr
Mikael Rask KO 5 Piotr Bartnicki
Luis Rosado KO 6 Vincent Pettway
Corey Johnson W 8 Pat Byrd
Sebastian Valdez KO 7 Floyd Weaver
Jimmy Lange KO 2 Sam Harvey
Dante Craig KO 4 Dyrell Crayton

WELTERWEIGHTS

Julian Holland KO 7 Shannan Taylor
Cory Spinks W 12 Larry Marks
Jose Rivera KO 10 Frankie Randall
Christian Bladt W 10 Willy Wise
Germaine Sanders KO 8
Leonard Townsend
Peter Malinga KO 5 Mthokozisi Mthembu
Joseph Makaringe KO 6 Mandisi Sizani
Michele Orlando W 10 Vincenzo Finzi
Kermit Cintron KO 5 Said Ouali
Andre Eason W 6 Ronald Greer

JUNIOR WELTERWEIGHTS

Jose Luis Castillo KO 4 Fred Ladd
(Non-Title Bout)
Paul Spadafora W 10 Chucky T
(Non-Title Bout)
Ben Tackie W 12 Ray Oliveira
Teddy Reid KO 1 Joe Hutchinson
Wilfredo Negron KO 2 Ahmed Santos
Jorge Paez KO 3 Verdell Smith
Rocky Martinez W 8 Freddy Cruz
John Bailey KO 4 LeRoy Price
Giuseppe Lauri W Disq. 4 Alvaro Moreno
Masakazu Satake KO 5 Hiromu Kawata
Henry Bruseles KO 3 Gilbert Quiroz
Frankie Nunes W 4 Kurt Wilkins
Oscar Diaz KO 2 Jonathan Nelson
Juan Diaz W 8 Ubaldo Hernandez
Francisco Bojado KO 1 Jesse Varela
Ricardo Williams Jr. KO 3 Rodney Jones

LIGHTWEIGHTS

Colin Dunne KO 3 Sergei Starkov
Juan Lazcano KO 4 Julio Alvarez
Julio Diaz KO 4 Dairo Esalas
Victoriano Sosa KO 2 Enrique Ramirez
Julian Wheeler D 10 Daniel Alicea
Ernesto Zepeda KO 3 Mario Escamilla
Justin Juuko W 8 Charles Owiso
Stefano Zoff KO 7 Dariusz Snarski
Sandro Casamonica KO 4 Zoltan Kalocsai
Brian Adams Tech. Win 7 Yoni Vargas
Ricardo Silva W 10 Alberto Sicurella
Justin Rowsell W 6 Sam Setu
Marshall Martinez KO 1 Luis Lopez

JUNIOR LIGHTWEIGHTS

Luis Lizarraga KO 6 Tontcho Tontchev
Lakva Sim W 10 Tetsuya Shinozaki
David Santos KO 3 Jerry Cooper
Daniel Jimenez KO 8 Israel Coraliz
Regilio Tuur W 8 Freddy Cruz
Randy Suico KO 1 Karim Nashar
Nate Campbell KO 3 Steve Trumble
Nate Campbell KO 8 Victorio Abadia

FEATHERWEIGHTS

Marco Antonio Barrera KO 6 Enrique Sanchez
Juan Manuel Marquez KO 6 Julio Gamboa
Cassius Baloyi KO 7 Jorge Paredes
Julio Pablo Chacon KO 5 Edward Barrios
Hector Acero-Sanchez W 12 Baby Lorona
Robbie Peden W 12 Sergio Perez
Juan Carlos Ramirez KO 7 Jorge Reyes
Zahir Raheem KO 5 Ricardo Medina
David Murillo KO 4 Naomi Kim
Tony Wehbee KO 1 Mendicino Sebua
Eiichi Sugama KO 6 Yuji Gomez
Jason Pires W 8 Phillip Payne
Anthony Tshehla KO 4 Luyolo Kutsana
Rocky Juarez W 6 Juan Gutierrez

JUNIOR FEATHERWEIGHTS

Fernando Velardez KO 6 David Donis
Angel Chacon KO 4 Julio Cesar Cardona
Emmanuel Lucero W 12 John Lowey
Vincenzo Gigliotti W 12 Frederic Bonifai
Joan Guzman KO 2 Hector Julio Avila
Mustapha Hame W 10 Serge Poilblan
Francis Kiwanuka W 6 George Owenge
Roger Gonzalez KO 6 Joaquin Candelario

BANTAMWEIGHTS

Veerapol Sahaprom D 12 Toshiaki Nishioka
(Retains WBC Title)
Heriberto Ruiz W 10 Jorge Lacierva
Jorge Eliecer Julio KO 4
Juan Carlos Coverrubias
Cruz Carbajal W 12 Hugo Dianzo
Katsushige Kawashima W 10 Yokthai Sithoar
Carlos Madrigal KO 4 Sherwin Alferez
Brahim Asloum W 6 Javier Ortiz
Clarence Vinson KO 2 Oscar Martinez

JUNIOR BANTAMWEIGHTS

Celes Kobayashi W 12 Jesus Rojas
(Retains WBA Title)
Diego Morales KO 2 Felipe Ramirez
Ricardo Vargas W 10 Ruben Sanchez-Leon
Luis Perez W 10 Edicson Torres
Shingo Sasaki W 10 Takuya Kiya
Jose Navarro W 4 Heriberto Velasquez

FLYWEIGHTS

Fernando Montiel W 12 Jose Carita Lopez
Alejandro Montiel W 12 Oscar Andrade
Joma Gamboa KO 4
Samransak Singmanassuk
Noel Tunacao W 10 Songkram Porpaoin
Alex Ali Baba KO 3 Javier Varguez
Evaristo Primero W 12 Paulino Villalobos
Alex Sanchez W 6 Jose Laureano

JUNIOR FLYWEIGHTS

Hawk Makepula W 10 Roy Doliguez
Pilkoo Kang W 12 Nobuyuki Enomoto
Hiroshi Nakajima D 10 Puna Eminent
Juan Alfonso Keb-Baas W 10 Roberto Gomez
Marcos Obregon D 12 Luis Lazarte
Ivan Calderon W 6 Alberto Rossel

STRAWWEIGHTS

Yutaka Niida W 12 Chana Porpaoin
(Wins WBA Title)
Khulile Makeba W 12 Wele Maqolo
Isaac Bustos KO 3 Cristian Hernandez

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PRESENTS

The RING

FIGHTER of the MONTH

With just one look at Chris Byrd and David Tua, you knew who the favorite was in their fight. Byrd is a softly-muscled, unintimidating sort, 214 pounds of ever-smiling nice guy. Tua has legs almost as thick as Byrd's torso, trapezius muscles up to his ears, and a scowl nasty enough to beat a lot of fighters all by itself.

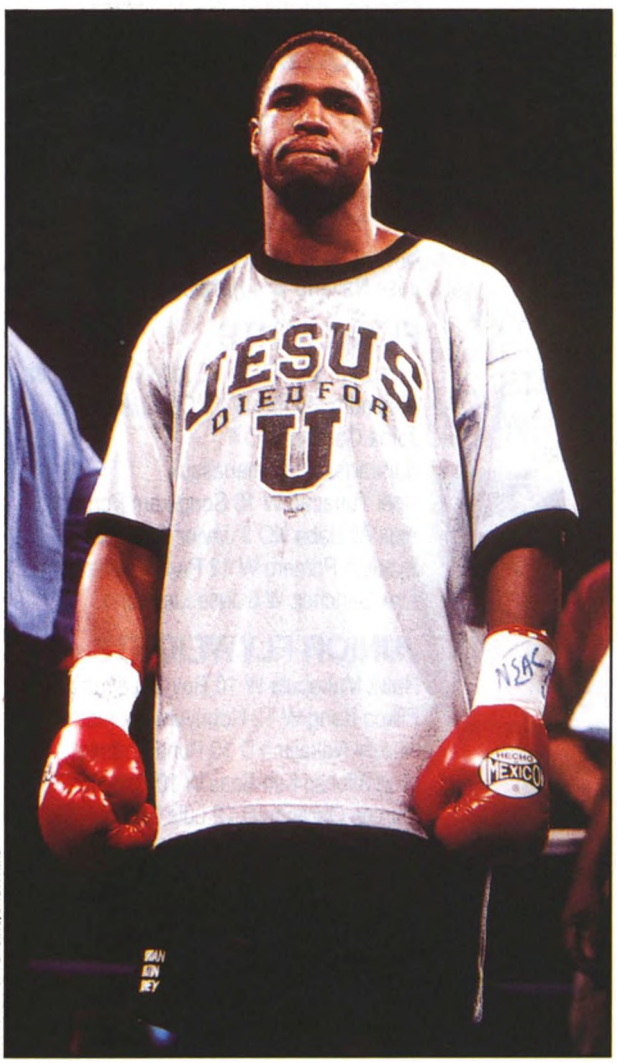


PHOTO BY TOM CASINO/SHOWTIME

Giving up 19 pounds and facing a colossal disadvantage in punching power, Byrd was a 3-1 underdog in his showdown with the Samoan. But Byrd knows how to make up for what he lacks in size and strength. He knows how to make the other guy fight the only kind of fight Byrd can win. He knows how to frustrate a slower man, tire out a guy supporting a lot of weight, and feed a stronger fighter just enough leather to make him wonder if it's worth the trouble. Byrd did all of the above against Tua, and now the man who once represented his country in the Olympics as a middleweight is a mandatory challenger to the heavyweight title.

To think, a year ago a lot of people considered Tua the most dangerous heavyweight in the world. Nobody would ever be crazy enough to say that about Byrd. But we just might have to recognize him as "The Baddest Man On The Planet" someday soon anyway.

• • • •

Chris Byrd

RINGSIDE REPORTS

Paulie Ayala W 12 Bones Adams

Las Vegas, Nevada: In the weeks leading up to their fight, Ayala and Adams acted as if they were the best of friends. They were kind and respectful to each other, complimentary at every turn. But when the bell rang for their 122-pound showdown, they tore into each other with a ferocity reserved for those who have been feuding for years.

In a fight worthy of Fight of the Year consideration, Ayala scored yet another close decision, getting a split verdict based in large part on a two-point round he was given despite not having scored a knockdown. Judges Dave Moretti (114-113) and Jerry Roth (115-112) had it for Ayala, while Duane Ford scored it for Adams (114-113). THE RING's card favored Adams, 115-113.

The second round turned out to be the pivotal one. Ayala, 122, Fort Worth, Texas, stunned Adams, 122, Las Vegas, in the second half of the round and had the former WBA super bantamweight champion in serious jeopardy of being stopped. Adams hung on to Ayala's waist and legs in a desperate bid to remain erect. All three judges scored the round 10-8 for Ayala, following a new dictate from Nevada State Athletic Commission Executive Director Marc Ratner to be more liberal in awarding 10-8 rounds without knockdowns. Had Moretti scored it 10-9, his card would have been even, and the fight would have been a draw.

"Judges have to do what they have to do," Ayala, 33-1 (12), said. "It's not like I'm intimidating them or trying to influence them. I just fight. They score. Then they add it up. Bottom line, Bones and I put on a great show. We showed people what this sport can be.

"Forget about titles and rankings and all the politics, and put the best in against the best. That's what I want. Who cares about anything else? It's about putting on a show for the people and providing for your family the best you know how."

The 27-year-old Adams, predictably, disagreed with the decision. He admitted he fell behind early, but thought his body work in the middle and late rounds was enough for him to pull out the victory. He had a clear edge on the CompuBox stats, out-throwing Ayala 816-761, and outlanding him 230-157. Much of Adams' work was done inside, banging away at the 31-year-old Ayala's body. Adams said he thought that should have been enough to give him the win.

"This is professional boxing," Adams, 41-4-3 (19), said. "I was scoring to the body, round after round. Was anybody watching that? That's supposed to count because this is the pros. I thought I landed the better punches and I landed a lot more. I really took him to the body."

The crowd was tense as the two battled toe-to-toe over the final three minutes, but it turned out that the final round, which Adams won clearly, meant nothing. Ayala already had the fight locked up. If Adams had won the 11th, when he suffered a nasty cut above his left eye from an inadvertent headbutt, he would have won the fight.

PHOTO BY CHRIS FARINA/TOP RANK

Ayala rattles Bones en route to controversial decision

The referee was Joe Cortez (USA).
Promoter: Top Rank
Television: HBO
(8-4-01)
Kevin Iole

Wladimir Klitschko KO 6 Charles Shufford

Las Vegas, Nevada: Shufford seemed wary of coming out of the dressing room for his fight with Klitschko. When he got into the ring and the bell rang, it was apparent why.

Klitschko thrashed the timid Shufford, knocking him down twice with long, accurate right hands and then finishing him off in the sixth with a left hook. Shufford, 28, did little to try to win the fight, staying in a cautious, defensive posture from the opening bell. The crowd was clearly not happy with the lack of action and, by the last two rounds of the fight, was booing lustily.

Klitschko, 25, delivered what they were looking for in the sixth, throwing a thunderous left hook that floored Shufford for the third time in the fight. Shufford, an 11-1 underdog, managed to stand but was extremely wobbly, and referee Kenny Bayless (USA) halted it at 2:55 of the sixth.

"I heard [the booing], but I had to remain calm and do the job," Klitschko, 37-1 (34), said. "He was tough to fight because he was very careful. A guy like that is not easy. You have to be patient and wait for the right spot."

Shufford spent the night backing away from the bigger and stronger Klitschko, trying to fend off powerpunches. Shufford landed just 16 punches, including nine of 64 powershots.

The 6'5", 241-pound Klitschko stalked the 6'3", 234-pound Shufford for most of the bout. The massive Ukrainian put Shufford down with straight right hands in the second round and in the third. Both were solid punches, but Klitschko said he wasn't as certain of their power as he was when he stopped Derrick Jefferson in the second round in Munich on March 24.

PHOTO BY CHRIS FARINA/TOP RANK

Klitschko's long jab finds Shufford

"I hurt my hand [when I hit Jefferson], and I thought, *Oh my God, I might have killed him*," Klitschko said. "Tonight, I didn't know as well."

He knew in the sixth when he came over a Shufford right hand and drilled him with a short left hook. The punch traveled only about 18 inches, but it had more than enough power to stop Shufford, 17-2 (9). The hometown fighter fell back into a neutral corner, the ring ropes saving him from banging his head on the canvas. He got up at the count of eight, but Bayless waved it off.

"I'm glad he did that," said Klitschko, who earned $500,000 plus a percentage of the profits from German television.

Promoters: Top Rank, Universum-Box
Television: HBO
(8-4-01)
Kevin Iole

Juan Carlos Gomez KO 5 Al Cole

Las Vegas, Nevada: On paper, it looked like an intriguing undercard fight, a current cruiserweight champion and a former cruiserweight champion meeting at heavyweight. But as it turned out, the bout between Gomez and Cole was hardly worth remembering. Gomez was making his first appearance at heavyweight, but little could be gleaned about his chances at the sport's most glamorous level because of the feeble effort put forth by Cole.

Gomez, who still holds the WBC cruiserweight title and has defended it a division-record nine times, weighed 208 for the bout, which came only two days after he was married in a private ceremony at the Mandalay Bay wedding chapel. Gomez won every completed round on all three cards and then closed the show early in the fifth. Cole, 231, Spring Valley, New York, looked weary and disinterested and took a pounding from the smaller man. The 37-year-old veteran seemed content to eat a steady diet of jabs and offered little in the way of resistance.

"This was a start for me," Gomez, 28, said of his move to the heavyweights. "It is a win, and that's important. Al Cole has fought a long time as a heavyweight, so it gave me a chance to see where I am. I am not naturally big like a lot of the heavyweights, but I think I can do all right."

Gomez scored the only knockdown of the fight in the fifth, which caused referee Tony Weeks (USA) to stop the fight at 1:10 of the round. Cole found himself on the deck in the fourth as well, but that was as the result of a scrum along the ropes that ended with the stronger Gomez flinging Cole down. It wasn't a knockdown, but the weary Cole had difficulty getting to his feet.

Gomez, 33-0 (28), unleashed a sharp series of punches in the final sequence, nearly every one of which found its mark. He ended the deal with a right-left combination that left Cole dazed and bewildered against the ropes. Weeks saw that Cole, 31-9-2 (16), had neither the skill nor the inclination to keep fighting and waved it off, saving him more of a beating.

Gomez said he's not sure of which weight he'll campaign at in the future.

"Honestly, I don't like carrying that much [weight]," the German-based Cuban said. "I have to think. Maybe I'll stay as a cruiserweight."

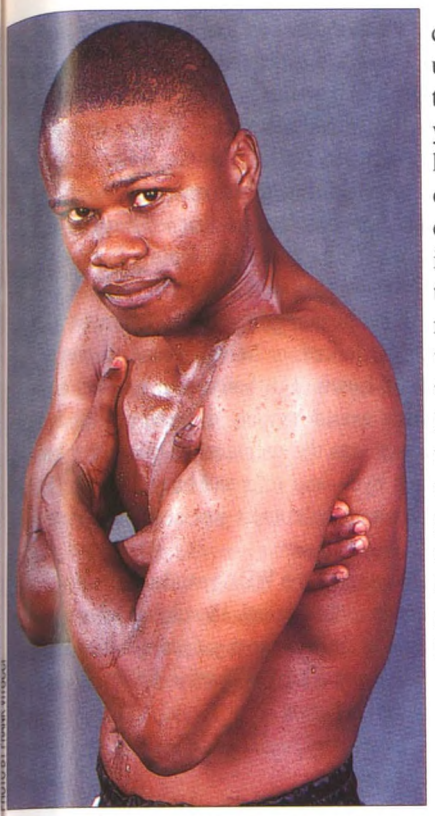
Promoters: Top Rank, Universum-Box
(8-4-01)
Kevin Iole

Vernon Forrest KO 4 Edgar Ruiz

Chester, West Virginia: IBF welterweight champion Forrest's objective in his first fight since claiming the title was, as he put it, "to send a message out to everybody else." If the message he intended to send was that he's a cut above the journeymen and clubfighters, then message received. But if he wanted to prove some sort of superiority over WBC champ Sugar Shane Mosley, his non-title bout against the mediocre Ruiz was not the vehicle to take him there.

Forrest, 150½, Augusta, Georgia, started slowly, but became more and more effective as each round passed. Ruiz, 151½, Mexico, on the other hand, seemed to be following a fight plan of movement and counterpunching for the first two rounds, before getting lazy defensively and giving up on himself once Forrest's powershots started landing.

After a nondescript first round, Forrest landed a telling right-left combination late in round two, causing Ruiz to hold. A four-punch



Forrest took care of business against Ruiz

combination softened up Ruiz further in the third, and the 28-year-old Mexican had little fight left in him once the fourth started. About 45 seconds into what would be the final round, Forrest, 30, rocked Ruiz with a right uppercut, then scored with a left hook and another uppercut, sending the underdog down. Ruiz got up at the count of nine and gave it one last shot, even landing a nice counter left hook. But when Forrest hammered him with three hooks and yet another right uppercut, Ruiz, 18-5-1 (11), dropped again and didn't get up until just after referee Dave Johnson (USA) reached the count of 10. The time of the knockout was 2:04 of round four.

"Hopefully, we can get the big fight unification with Mosley, and if not, I'm gonna keep on working," Forrest, 33-0 (26) with 1 no-contest, said afterward. "It's a fight that boxing wants, it's a fight that I want; Shane Mosley wants it. We're gonna get it done."

Television: ESPN2

Promoter: Michael Acri Boxing Promotions

(8-24-01)

Lou Del Valle D 12 Bruno Girard

Marseille, France: Roy Jones' elevation to the absurd title "Super Champion" by the WBA left Del Valle, 174½, Bronx, New York, and Girard, 173½, France, to battle for the vacant WBA light heavyweight belt at a makeshift arena on the beach of Le Prado. Jones' craft and class were conspicuously absent ingredients, but 4,000 fans were kept on edge through 12 rounds that proved inconclusive and left both fighters claiming victory was rightfully theirs.

The 33-year-old Del Valle, formerly a holder of this title, had perhaps the greater grievance. He seemed to produce slightly the better work and had obviously conceded territorial advantage to the 31-year-old former WBA super middleweight titlist. Del Valle won this crown on foreign soil in 1997, stopping Eddy Smulders in eight rounds in Aachen, Germany, before being outpointed by Jones in July '98. Determined to make the most of his chance to return to the relatively big time, Del Valle opened strongly, but quickly discovered that Girard, 39-2-2 (6), could hold a decent punch at the higher weight and could mix it up with a bona fide light heavyweight.

Girard had the edge in speed, and he made this count toward the end of the seventh with a sharp combination. English referee John Coyle warned both men for separate infringements in the eighth, and Del Valle, 31-2-1 (22), made a stronger effort in the ninth and 10th to pull into an apparent lead on the scorecards. But Girard refused to give ground to his southpaw opponent, and at the final bell, neither could be sure of the verdict.

Jesus Cova (Venezuela) scored it 116-113 for Girard, Renato Caddeo (Italy) had it 115-114 for Del Valle (the same as THE RING), and Orlando Sam (Panama) saw it 115-115.

"Girard could have won, but it was a close fight," said Louis Acaries, the Frenchman's promoter and co-trainer. A rematch may be held at Marseille's Palais des Sports in February 2002.

Promoter: AB Stars Productions

(8-4-01)

Brian Doogan

Erik Morales W 12 In Jin Chi

Los Angeles, California: When Roy Jones headlines, it's common for the chief supporting bout to be the most entertaining on the show. It happened when Derrick Gainer lost to Kevin Kelley, when Vassiliy Jirov pounded the IBF cruiserweight title away from Arthur Williams, and when David Izon outlasted Derrick Jefferson. It also happened at Staples Center, where Morales and Chi staged a memorable slugfest to save the Jones-Julio Gonzalez pay-per-view.

Morales, eying a hotly anticipated 2002 rematch with Marco Antonio Barrera, defended the WBC featherweight title for the first time in yet another give-and-take battle. Though he again showed signs of fading down the stretch, he recovered in time to finish strong for a unanimous decision.

Morales, 126, got out to an early lead, but instead of using his superior jab to accent his more polished boxing skills and nine-inch reach advantage, he was mauled and had no choice but to swap fire. Chi did his best work in close—including rabbit punches—when he was able to pin Morales on the ropes for long stretches.

In the third round, Morales, 41-0 (31), froze Chi with a left hook, and at the end of the round he landed a straight right that Chi handled well. At that moment, it became clear that this wasn't going to be easy.

By the fifth, the momentum started to shift when Chi rocked Morales with a hard right. Being the proud Mexican warrior he is, Morales slammed his gloves together and invited the Korean in to exchange. He obliged, but in the sixth, one close-range exchange ended with an accidental headbutt that left Morales with a badly cut and swollen left eye.

All hell broke loose, and Chi, 24-2 (14), got the best of it, eating a right uppercut but responding with a right hand as Morales appeared rattled by not only the challenger's dogged determination but also his roughhouse tactics. At the end of the round, Chi taunted his nemesis as 20,000-plus were on their feet.

"After the headbutt, I couldn't go after him because he was a very dirty fighter," Morales said.

Chi, 125½, seemed on the verge of dethroning the champion in the seventh when he slipped a right hand and scored with a homerun right of his own. Instead of following up, however, he chose to celebrate, and by the ninth the momentum swayed back to Morales, who had regained his composure and caught his second wind. He took control with the jab, while Chi's main responses came in the form of low blows and rabbit punches.

Referee Jose Cobian (USA) deducted a point from Chi for kidney punching on the break while holding down Morales' head in the 10th,

PHOTO BY CHRIS FARINA

Chi and Morales let the leather fly

but it was in the 11th that the champion really asserted his superiority. Morales, 24, jolted Chi, 28, every time he landed clean to the body, and finally unleashed a four-punch flurry in which a pair of left uppercuts upstairs did the most damage. Morales looked much stronger late than he had in his previous fight, against Guty Espadas.

In the 12th, Morales continued to score with left uppercuts, only to be stung by a pair of rights as he stepped straight back from an exchange with his hands down. But he recouped, and a furious trade preceded the bell. Judges Lou Filippo (USA), James Jen Kin (USA), and Daniel Van De Wiele (Belgium) all scored it for Morales, by scores of 116-111, 117-110, and 116-112, respectively.

Television: TVKO
Promoter: Top Rank
(7-28-01)
Johnnie Whitehead

Andrew Lewis No-Contest 2 Ricardo Mayorga

Los Angeles, California: Mayorga might just have been on his way to becoming the new WBA welterweight champion, but an accidental headbutt sadly ended what appeared to have the makings of an exciting shootout on the undercard of Jones-Gonzalez. Though hardly anyone knew anything about Costa Rican mandatory challenger Mayorga, he wasn't content to just play it safe against the quick southpaw champion Lewis, who was making his second title defense. Instead, he showed "Six Heads" no respect, rushing out at the opening bell to score with a telling left hook.

Mayorga landed the harder, cleaner punches, and the first round was his as Staples Center was set abuzz. Lewis, 21-0-1 (19) with 1 no-contest, initially looked more shocked than hurt, but when Mayorga, 22-3-1 (20) with 1 no-contest, planted a pair of straight rights on his kisser, he knew this wouldn't be like his most recent fights. This would be a war.

Mayorga wouldn't allow Lewis, 147, Brooklyn, New York, to get in a comfort zone with the pitty-pat jabs and rapid-fire combinations that led him to the title with a knockout of former champion James Page. Mayorga, 146¾, was inspired to keep the pressure on in the second. Either he was going to punch himself out by swinging for the fences, or he was going to punch out the 30-year-old Lewis. But before we got a chance to find out which would happen, the two collided face first, and Lewis was the recipient of two nasty cuts—one over each eye—and referee Marty Denkin (USA) was forced to stop the contest just seven seconds into the round.

Because Mayorga is the WBA mandatory, the two will have a rematch once Lewis, who needed 18 stitches to repair the wounds, is cleared to fight again. All three judges, Charles Hassett (USA), John Schorle (USA), and Albert Wilensky (USA), scored the only completed round for the challenger.

Television: TVKO
Promoter: Top Rank
(7-28-01)
Johnnie Whitehead

Yutaka Niida W 12 Chana Porpaoin

Yokohama, Japan: Unbeaten left hooker Niida, 103½, Japan, captured the WBA 105-pound title as he displayed good opening attack and withstood the defending champ's last surge to earn a close but unanimous 12-round decision over Porpaoin, 105, Thailand. Judges Derek Milham (Australia) and Silvestre Abainza (Philippines) both scored it 116-113, while Muhong Moon (Korea) had it 116-115.

Niida, 22, was positive enough to win the first three rounds, while the 35-year-old Porpaoin, making the first defense of his second reign, patiently probed the challenger. The veteran Thailander began to pu

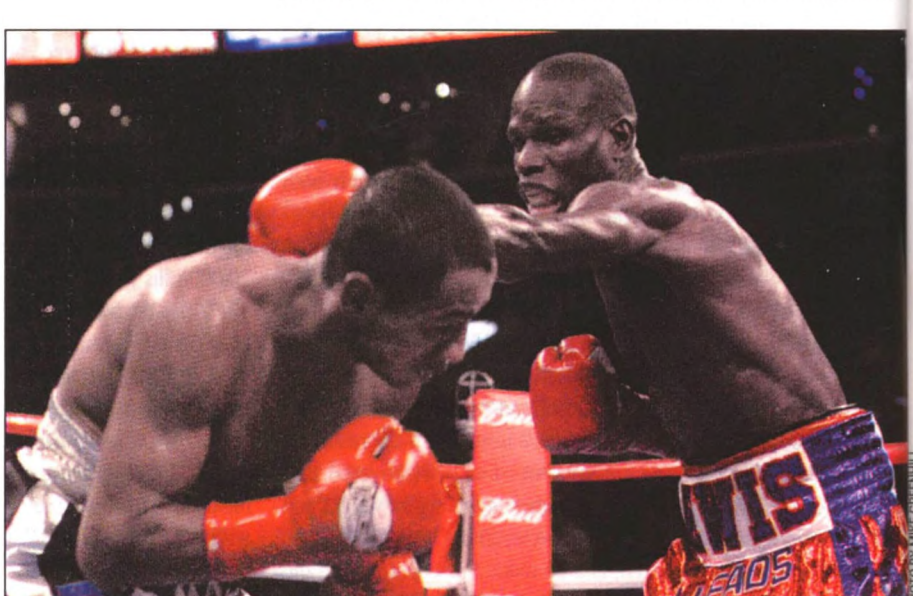


PHOTO BY MIKE GREENVILLE

Mayorga ducks a Lewis left

the pressure on his shorter opponent from the fourth round on, and the tide turned frequently until the end.

Porpaoin was in command in the fourth, but Niida landed a solid left hook that stunned the champ and won him the fifth. Porpaoin then dominated the sixth through eighth with aggressive rallies. Niida turned loose and scored with good left hooks to the face to take the ninth, but Porpaoin, 44-2-2 (16), attacked the youngster to win the 10th. Niida connected with stronger combinations to take the 11th, but the champ showed his pride and determination, letting rip with desperate combinations in the 12th.

It was a very close affair, but Niida showed more effective aggressiveness than the cagey champ when all was said and done. Referee Steve Smoger (USA) described the fight as a clean and easy fight to handle.

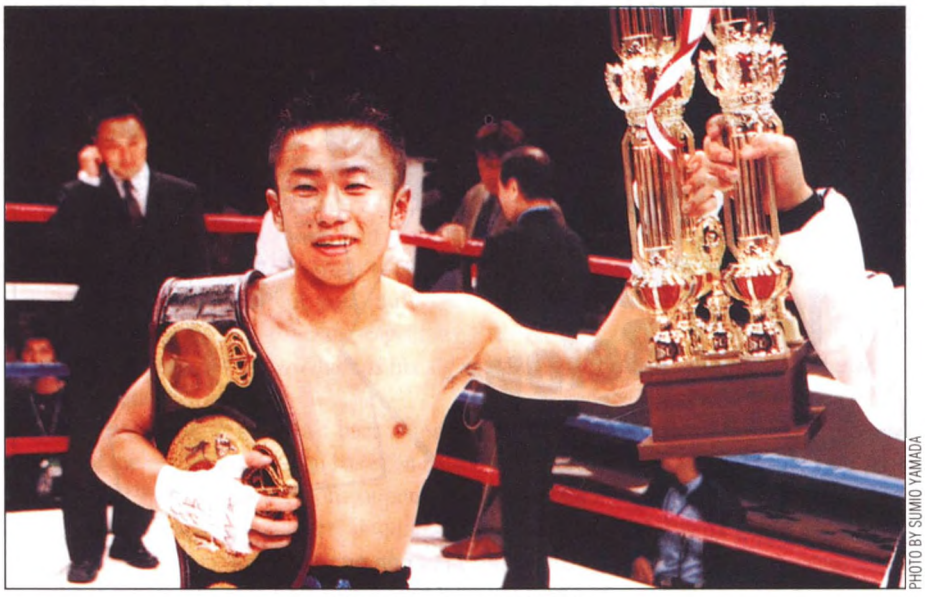


PHOTO BY SUMIO YAMADA

Niida celebrates upset title win

The newly crowned Niida, 14-0-3 (7), will be obliged to fight ex-champ Joma Gamboa in Japan in his first defense.

Promoters: Yokohama Hikari Promotions, Teiken Promotions

(8-28-01)

Joe Koizumi

Ben Tackie W 12 Ray Oliveira

Ledyard, Connecticut: Everyone figured Ghana's "Wonder" Tackie would punch harder than Fall River, Massachusetts, junior welterweight Oliveira. But no one, including Oliveira, expected Tackie to also outwork him.

Tackie, 23-2 (14), took Oliveira's NABF 140-pound title with a majority 12-round decision in the main event of ESPN2's *Friday Night Fights* program, telecast from the Fox Theater at Foxwoods Casino. Oliveira, 42-8-1 (19), showed signs of being able to counterpunch and outbox Tackie in rounds one and three. But as the Ghanaian kept up his relentless attack from bell to bell, round after round, Oliveira spent so much time on defense he could never sustain much offense himself.

In round four, for example, Oliveira, 140, landed three consecutive hooks to Tackie's head, but was unable to follow up, despite the roaring support of the 1,400 fans in the Fox Theater. Tackie's onslaught of overhand rights ended up winning that round and most others. Oliveira made a stirring comeback in rounds 10 and 11, seeming to draw energy when Tackie, 140, landed his hardest shots. But it was too little to change the flow, and a crushing Tackie right hand had Oliveira staggered in the final round. Oliveira has never been stopped in his 51-fight career, but this was as close as he's ever come.

Judge George Smith scored it 116-112, and Jorge DeGabrielle saw it 115-113 for Tackie, while Clark Sammartino tabbed it a 114-114 deadlock. THE RING saw it 116-112 for Tackie.

"I trained hard knowing I was coming to his hometown," Tackie, 28, said. "I knew I had to beat him hands down."

Oliveira, 32, had a swollen left eye afterward, but his main problem was dehydration, and he skipped the postfight press conference as EMTs gave him intravenous fluids and later took him to Backus Hospital in nearby Norwich as a precaution.

"Ray didn't complain about the decision at all," promoter Jimmy Burchfield said. "He said he just couldn't get with it tonight."

Tackie's work rate was so high that he and Oliveira combined for 2,729 punches thrown, the third highest total ever recorded by CompuBox. Oliveira's December '93 fight with Zack Padilla is the record holder, with 3,020, and his 12-round win over Vince Phillips last winter in this ring was second. Oliveira threw 1,371 punches while Tackie threw 1,358, and although Oliveira was more accurate, Tackie's harder blows carried the night.

(8-10-01)

Jay N. Miller ■

PHOTO BY CHRIS FARINA

Tackie attacks on his way to outpointing Oliveira

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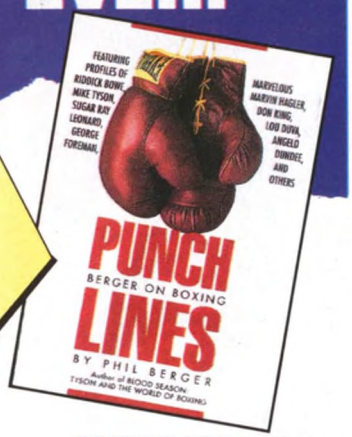

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New Face

(Continued from page 16)

looked like. Paul Dunne, Hatton's amateur coach, gave The Hitman a pair of old glasses, then told him to sit over in a stairwell and cross his legs. Once he saw Hatton looking up sheepishly, the Irish trainer reacted with skepticism. *"This is Ricky Hatton?* We'll fight 'im."

Hatton clobbered the Irish fighter in 35 seconds.

"Most people in England call me a choir boy," said Hatton, laughing. "I'm one of these guys who can sit in church and sing hymns, but that changes when I get into the ring. I fight an attacking style. Most people when they first see me say that I look so young, but when the bell rings, it is kind of like Jekyll-Hyde.

"I'm from a good family. My mom and dad brought me up the correct way, and I've always been well-mannered. The fury in the ring is unusual. People say I don't fight like the typical English boxer. The minute the bell goes, there is a total contrast that I can't explain. I look so young it's very deceiving, and I do like that. But I am 22 years of age and I'm very, very strong. I still haven't matured, so I think I'll get stronger over time."

Carol Hatton, Ricky's mother, does not cringe when she sees Ricky fight. She has become used to the transformation her son undergoes once inside the ropes.

"Richard can be mean. He becomes a vicious little man inside the ring; he becomes The Hitman," Carol admitted.

Besides Hatton, no one in his immediate family ever boxed. He's from a soccer family. Hatton's father, Ray, was a professional soccer player in England, and it's a sport that Ricky also mastered at an early age. He tried out for the Manchester City Skill of Excellence club when he was 14. But because he couldn't give a full commitment to both boxing and soccer, Hatton was forced to choose one sport over the other. The challenging lure of boxing was too great for Ricky, and he sided with the Sweet Science. The boxing bug also bit Hatton's younger brother, Matthew, who has started his pro career 8-0.

Ricky's decision didn't come as a total surprise to Ray, who says that Ricky was never the type of kid to cause a play-

ground scrap, but he also wasn't the type of kid to step away either.

"I would have preferred for Richard to play soccer, because he was talented at soccer, but he loved boxing and the one-to-one challenge," Ray Hatton explained. "Richard was always a small, stocky guy and he was always better with his fists. Billy Graham, his pro trainer, says he's never seen anyone change their personality before a fight like Richard.

"A lot of people ask where that fury comes from, and his maternal grandmother used to say his great, great grandfather was a great bare knuckle fighter in Ireland. He came over to England and did a little bit over in England, too."

So that may explain where Hatton gets the fighting rage from. How far Hatton, who holds a couple of minor regional titles, can take this demanding style is another issue. One thing, however, is certain: Hatton puts on exciting fights.

"Hatton is a big puncher and a superb bodypuncher," said Claude Abrams, editor-in-chief of the British weekly *Boxing News*. "He's very talented, and he has a good chin. The big problem is that he cuts easily. He's a hands-high, straight-ahead type of fighter, who stalks his opponents in the fashion of someone like Felix Trinidad. He's a good finisher as well. I like him a lot. Early in his career, he wasn't fighting against anyone good, but you could see him throwing quality punches, especially the left hook to the body, which is his signature punch."

That crunching blow has been a large part of the reason that Hatton has been able to stop 19 of the first 24 pro opponents he's faced. Hatton, however, is quick to point out that he carries power with every punch he throws, not just the left hook, which Dunne taught him as an amateur. Hatton likes to work angles and feels his right cross is just as potent as his left hook.

Hatton also realizes his all-out attacking mode has its drawbacks. He reluctantly accepts that he's going to get hit, so his offense is his best defense at this stage of his career. He simply doesn't give an opponent a chance to counterattack.

"I still have a few years before I reach my peak, and I realize I have to be careful about defense," Hatton said. "I think that one of my best assets is my chin. There's been plenty of times I'll ask an opponent after a fight, 'How do I compare to such-and-such an opponent?' It's always good to get their opinion. They usually tell me I have a great chin, that they hit me with a punch and they expected more than a dent, I guess."

There is one outside-of-the-ring problem Hatton would like to correct as his pro career hurtles forward. Since he's turned pro, his mother has picked up a nasty habit to calm her nerves before her oldest son steps into the ring. She's started smoking cigarettes.

"I'll have to get her to quit," Ricky vowed.

The way Hatton sees it, the only smoke rising in the arena when he fights should be coming off his gloves. ■

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March 1985: Blood And Guts Against The Bonecrusher: Larry Holmes-A Champion Ready To Fall? Plus: Sugar Ray, Olympians, "Upset Saturday," Meza.

April 1985: Cooney vs. Page: The $10-Million Challenge! Plus: Hagler-Hearns, Year In Review.

May 1985: Who's The Baddest? Preview Of The Hagler-Hearns Superfight. Plus: Hector Camacho, Arroyo-Alli, boxing mysteries.

June 1985: Donald Curry: A Hot Fighter As Cool As Ice. Plus: Hagler-Hearns, Page, Coetzee, Carl Williams.

July 1985: Sensational Hector Camacho: Poised For The Lightweight Throne. Plus: Mugabi, Holmes, Superfights, Curry, Cooney.

Sept. 1985: A Career In Ruins? Gerry Cooney: Time Is Running Out. Plus: Holmes-Williams, Hearns, Overrated & Underrated.

Oct. 1985: Pinklon Thomas: "I'm The Real Heavyweight Champion." Plus: Holmes, McGuigan-Pedroza, Pryor, Costello.

Nov. 1985: Can Larry Holmes Break "The Record"? Plus: Chavez, Boza-Edwards, McGuigan-Taylor, Hagler.

Dec. 1985: Special Previews: Hagler vs. Mugabi, Hearns vs. Shuler. Plus: Camacho-Ramirez, Pintor, McGirt.

Jan. 1986: Curry & McCrory Clash For The Undisputed Welterweight Crown. Plus: Camacho, Breland, Holmes-Spinks, Benitez.

Feb. 1986: Heavyweight King Michael Spinks: His Formula For A Successful Title Reign. Plus: McGuigan, Azumah Nelson, Camacho, Paul.

March 1986: Michael Spinks' Own Story: From The Streetlight To The Spotlight. Plus: McGuigan, Camacho-Rosario, Whitaker.

April 1986: Donald Curry Demolishes Milton McCrory: The Cobra's Most Marvelous Fight Is Yet To Come. Plus: Tyson, McGuigan, Gomez, Spinks, Year In Review.

June 1986: Electrifying!!! Mike Tyson Explodes On Network TV. Plus: Arguello, Bramble, Curry-McCallum, Matthew Hilton.

July 1986: Hagler & Hearns Roar To The Rematch. Plus: Tyson, Lalonde, Curry, Sandoval, Azumah.

Sept. 1986: Mike Tyson Shows He's Mortal ... But He's Still Headed For Immortality. Plus: Hilton, Hagler, Pazienza, Frank Bruno, Espinoza.

Oct. 1986: Hector "Macho" Camacho Retains His Title, But Loses His Nickname. Plus: Mike Tyson, Michael Olajide Jr., Gerry Cooney.

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Dec. 1986: Mike Tyson's Drive To The Title: Ruthless, Brutal, Unstoppable. Plus: Hagler-Leonard, Meldrick Taylor, Hearns, Biggs.

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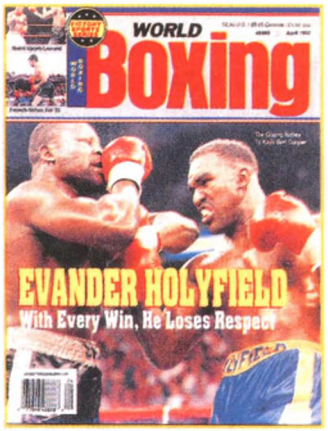

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☐ SEP/81	☐ OCT/85	☐ OCT/87	☐ OCT/92	☐ FAL/96
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WORLDWIDE RATINGS

The ratings of the three major governing bodies recognized by The Ring are supplied by the organizations themselves. They are updated on these pages as soon as they are made available to us. In this issue, the WBA ratings were compiled as of July 2001, the WBC as of August 2001 and the IBF as of August 2001.

HEAVYWEIGHTS	WBC	WBA	IBF
Hasim Rahman (USA)	C	–	C
John Ruiz (USA)	–	C	–
Mike Tyson (USA)	1	6	5
Lennox Lewis (GB)	2	4	4
Vitaly Klitschko (UKR)	3	3	–
Kirk Johnson (CAN)	4	–	3
Lance Whitaker (USA)	5	5	6
David Tua (NZ)	6	8	9
Fres Oquendo (USA)	7	–	7
Larry Donald (USA)	8	9	12
Henry Akinwande (GB)	9	7	8
Vaughn Bean (USA)	10	12	–
Kirk Johnson (CAN)	–	1	–
Evander Holyfield (USA)	–	2	–
Nicolay Valouev (RUS)	26	10	–
Chris Byrd (USA)	19	–	1
Vacant	–	–	2
Ray Mercer (USA)	15	–	10

CRUISERWEIGHTS	WBC	WBA	IBF
Juan Carlos Gomez (CUBA)	C	–	–
Virgil Hill (USA)	–	C	–
Vassiliy Jirov (KAZ)	–	–	C
Louis Azille (DR)	1	4	7
Vincenzo Cantatore (ITA)	2	–	–
Wayne Braithwaite (GUY)	3	11	10
Alexander Gurov (UKR)	4	2	5
Dale Brown (CAN)	5	–	–
Jean Mark Mormeck (FRA)	6	1	–
Arthur Williams (USA)	7	6	3
O'Neil Bell (USA)	8	12	–
Carlos Cruzat (CHI)	9	–	–
Carl Thompson (GB)	10	7	8
James Toney (USA)	–	3	4
Fabrice Tiozzo (FRA)	12	5	11
Vincenzo Cantatore (ITA)	–	8	–
Andre Purlett (GUY)	–	9	–
Imamu Mayfield (USA)	21	10	6
Vacant	–	–	1
Vacant	–	–	2
Jorge Castro (ARG)	–	–	9

LT. HEAVYWEIGHTS	WBC	WBA	IBF
Roy Jones (USA)	C	C	C
Clinton Woods (GB)	1	4	6
Yawe Davis (ITA)	2	–	–
Reggie Johnson (USA)	3	5	2
Mads Larsen (DEN)	4	–	–
Eric Harding (USA)	5	–	3
Glenn Kelly (AUSTRL)	6	3	1
Antonio Tarver (USA)	7	7	4
Julio Gonzalez (USA)	8	9	–
Montell Griffin (USA)	9	11	–
Michael Nunn (USA)	10	–	–
Lou Del Valle (USA)	–	1	–
Bruno Girard (FRA)	–	2	5
Robert Koon (USA)	18	6	–
David Telesco (USA)	–	8	7
Glencoffe Johnson (USA)	–	10	9
Will Taylor (USA)	–	–	8
Lou Del Valle (USA)	–	–	10

SUPER MIDDLEWEIGHTS	WBC	WBA	IBF
Eric Lucas (CAN)	C	–	–
Byron Mitchell (USA)	–	C	–
Sven Ottke (GER)	–	–	C
Dingaan Thobela (SA)	1	–	–
Markus Beyer (GER)	2	–	6
Omar Sheika (USA)	3	6	4
David Reid (USA)	4	–	7
David Starie (GB)	5	7	5
Glenn Catley (GB)	6	–	–
Nordin Ben Salah (HOL)	7	–	–
Thomas Tate (USA)	8	8	3
Danilo Haussler (GER)	9	11	–
Dana Rosenblatt (USA)	10	2	12
Vacant	–	1	2
Andrei Shkalikov (RUS)	18	3	–
Manuel Siacca (PR)	–	4	–
Mads Larsen (DEN)	–	5	11
Rudy Markussen (DEN)	14	9	–
Mikkel Kessler (DEN)	17	10	–
James Butler (USA)	13	–	1
Antwun Echols (USA)	11	–	8
Charles Brewer (USA)	27	–	9
Willie McIntyre (USA)	23	–	10

MIDDLEWEIGHTS	WBC	WBA	IBF
Bernard Hopkins (USA)	C	–	C
Felix Trinidad (PR)	–	C	–
Erland Betare (FRA)	1	–	6
Howard Eastman (GB)	2	1	4
Tito Mendoza (PAN)	3	10	3
Kevin Palmer (USA)	4	–	–
Cristian Sanavia (ITA)	5	–	–
William Joppy (USA)	6	3	7
Keith Holmes (USA)	7	6	5
Carl Daniels (USA)	8	11	1
Morrade Hakkar (FRA)	9	–	–
Jerry Elliott (NIG)	10	–	–
David Reid (USA)	–	2	–
Darren Obah (AUSTRL)	–	4	–
Julio Cesar Green (DR)	–	5	–
Hassine Cherifi (FRA)	–	7	–
Antonio Perugino (ITA)	14	8	–
Ryan Rhodes (GB)	–	9	–
Vacant	–	–	2
Brian Barbosa (USA)	15	–	8
Raymond Joval (HOL)	20	–	9
Ali Ennebati (FRA)	–	–	10

JR. MIDDLEWEIGHTS	WBC	WBA	IBF
Oscar De La Hoya (USA)	C	–	–
Vacant	–	C	C
Roman Karmazin (RUS)	1	6	–
Francisco Castillejo (SPA)	2	–	9
J.C. Candelo (COL)	3	8	6
Travis Simms (USA)	4	11	12
Fitz Vanderpool (CAN)	5	–	–
Quirino Garcia (MEX)	6	–	11
Mamadou Thiam (FRA)	7	4	–
Bronco McKart (USA)	8	–	3
Yory Boy Campas (MEX)	9	–	–
Alex Bunema (USA)	10	–	7
Jose Flores (MEX)	–	1	8
Fernando Vargas (USA)	–	2	4
Winky Wright (USA)	–	3	1
Ike Quartey (GHA)	–	5	–
Frank Olsen (DEN)	19	7	–
Santiago Samaniego (PAN)	–	9	–
Kevin Kelly (USA)	–	10	–
Robert Frazier (USA)	–	–	2
Nader Hamdan (AUSTRL)	30	–	5
Jason Papillion (USA)	–	–	10

WELTERWEIGHTS	WBC	WBA	IBF
Shane Mosley (USA)	C	–	–
Andrew Lewis (GUY)	–	C	–
Vernon Forrest (USA)	–	–	C
Jose Luis Cruz (MEX)	1	–	–
Carlos Baldomir (ARG)	2	7	–
Danny Perez (USA)	3	8	6
Thomas Damgaard (DEN)	4	2	5
Michele Piccirillo (ITA)	5	5	4
Shannan Taylor (AUSTRL)	6	–	–
Hercules Kyvelos (CAN)	7	–	7
Alessandro Duran (ITA)	8	–	–
Manuel Gomez (MEX)	9	–	–
Cory Spinks (USA)	10	–	2
Ricardo Mayorga (CR)	–	1	–
Michael Trabant (GERE)	–	3	–
Chantel Stanciel (USA)	17	4	–
James Page (USA)	–	6	–
Arturo Gatti (USA)	–	9	–
Frederic Klose (FRA)	20	10	–
Vacant	–	–	1
Rafael Pineda (COL)	13	–	3
Julian Holland (AUSTRL)	29	11	8
Oba Carr (USA)	18	–	9
Larry Marks (USA)	–	–	10

JR. WELTERWEIGHTS	WBC	WBA	IBF
Kostya Tszyu (AUSTRL)	C	C	–
Zab Judah (USA)	–	–	C
Gianluca Branco (ITA)	1	11	–
Oktay Urkal (TUR)	2	9	7
Ray Oliveira (USA)	3	–	9
Hector Camacho Jr (PR)	4	1	8

Eamonn Magee (GB)	5	–	–
Mikhail Krivolapov (RUS)	6	–	–
Gabriel Mapuoka (FRA)	7	–	–
Terronn Millett (USA)	8	–	3
Sharmba Mitchell (USA)	9	4	10
Masakazu Satake (JAP)	10	–	–
Diobelis Hurtado (CUB)	–	2	–
Randall Bailey (USA)	–	3	–
Khalid Rahilou (FRA)	–	5	–
Ricky Hatton (GB)	11	6	–
Alex Trujillo (PR)	–	7	–
Hiroyuki Maeda (JAP)	28	8	–
Demetrio Ceballos (PAN)	–	10	–
Vacant	–	–	1
Vacant	–	–	2
Antonio Diaz (USA)	16	12	4
Ben Tackie (GHA)	15	–	5
James Leija (USA)	–	–	6

LIGHTWEIGHTS	WBC	WBA	IBF
Jose Luis Castillo (MEX)	**C**	**–**	**–**
Julien Lorcy (FRA)	**–**	**C**	**–**
Paul Spadafora (USA)	**–**	**–**	**C**
Steve Johnston (USA)	1	–	5
Lakva Sim (MON)	2	–	–
Juan Lazcano (USA)	3	10	7
Lovemore Ndou (SA)	4	–	–
Alex Trujillo (PR)	5	–	–
Stefano Zoff (ITA)	6	5	–
Lawrence Ngobeni (SA)	7	–	–
Carlos Gerena (PR)	8	–	–
Dennis Holbaek (DEN)	9	11	12
Victoriano Damian Sosa (DR)	10	–	3
Raul Balbi (ARG)	–	1	–
Rick Yoshimura (JAP)	–	2	–
Miguel Callist (PAN)	–	3	–
Takanori Hatakeyama (JAP)	13	4	–
Julio Diaz (USA)	16	6	8
Edson Xuxa Nascimento (BRA)	28	7	9
Juan Gomez-Trinidad (PR)	17	8	11
Alberto Sicurella (ARG)	11	9	–
Vacant	–	–	1
Vacant	–	–	2
Angel Manfredy (USA)	–	–	4
Acelino Freitas (BRA)	–	–	6
Efren Hinojosa (USA)	–	–	10

JR. LIGHTWEIGHTS	WBC	WBA	IBF
Floyd Mayweather (USA)	**C**	**–**	**–**
Joel Casamayor (CUB)	**–**	**C**	**–**
Steve Forbes (USA)	**–**	**–**	**C**
Jesus Chavez (USA)	1	8	3
Sirimongkol Singmanassuk (THAI)	2	–	–
Kengo Nagashima (JAP)	3	–	–
Tiger Ari (PHIL)	4	–	–
Randy Suico (PHIL)	5	–	–
Philip Ndou (SA)	6	–	6
Affif Djelti (FRA)	7	–	–
Tontcho Tontchev (BUL)	8	2	8
Carlos Hernandez (EL SALV)	9	–	–
Alejandro Gonzalez (MEX)	10	–	–
Lakva Sim (MON)	–	1	–
Yodsanan Nanthachai (THAI)	18	3	–
Jongkwon Baek (KOR)	–	4	–
Lamont Pearson (USA)	16	5	1
Luis Navarro (USA)	13	6	–
Jorge Barrios (ARG)	–	7	–
Jose Miguel Cotto (PR)	23	9	–
Kinji Amano (JAP)	24	10	–
John Brown (USA)	–	–	2
Raul Balbi (ARG)	–	–	4
David Santos (USA)	–	–	5
Ernesto Zepeda (MEX)	14	–	7
Daniel Attah (NIG)	–	–	9
Carlos Hernandez (USA)	–	–	10

FEATHERWEIGHTS	WBC	WBA	IBF
Erik Morales (MEX)	**C**	**–**	**–**
Derrick Gainer (USA)	**–**	**C**	**–**
Frankie Toledo (USA)	**–**	**–**	**C**
Guty Espadas (MEX)	1	–	–
Injin Chi (KOR)	2	12	–
Naseem Hamed (GB)	3	1	7
Johnny Tapia (USA)	4	7	–
Manuel Calvo (SPA)	5	–	–
Robbie Peden (AUSTRL)	6	–	–
Scott Harrison (GB)	7	–	–
Augie Sanchez (USA)	8	–	3
Anthony Tshehla (SA)	9	–	–
Takashi Koshimoto (JAP)	10	–	–
Juan Manuel Marquez (MEX)	–	2	–
Daniel Seda (PR)	17	3	–
Victor Polo (COL)	–	4	2
Philip Ndou (SA)	–	5	–
Lewis Woods (US)	30	6	–
Armando Cordoba (PAN)	27	8	–
Angel Vasquez (PR)	–	9	5
Istvan Kovacs (HUN)	–	10	12
Manuel Medina (MEX)	13	–	1
Robbie Peden (AUSTRL)	–	–	4
Mbulelo Botile (SA)	–	–	6
David Toledo (USA)	–	–	8
Oscar Larios (MEX)	–	–	9
Fernando Velardez (MEX)	12	–	10

JR. FEATHERWEIGHTS	WBC	WBA	IBF
Willie Jorrin (USA)	**C**	**–**	**–**
Vacant	**–**	**C**	**1**
Manny Pacquaio (PHIL)	**–**	**–**	**C**
Michael Brodie (GB)	1	–	12
Israel Vazquez (MEX)	2	–	–
Oscar Larios (MEX)	3	–	–
Juan Manuel Marquez (MEX)	4	–	–
Wayne McCullough (IRE)	5	–	–
Osamu Sato (JAP)	6	8	–
Salim Medjkoune (FRA)	7	5	5
Marcos Licona (USA)	8	–	–
Nadel Hussein (AUSTRL)	9	–	–
Kiattisak Chocchoi (THAI)	10	–	–
Yobert Ortega (VEN)	–	1	–
Jose Rojas (VEN)	–	2	–
Sithyodthong Yoddamrong (THAI)	–	3	–
Enrique Sanchez (MEX)	–	4	3
Danny Romero (USA)	–	6	–
Kozo Ishii (JAP)	16	7	–
Israel Vasquez (MEX)	–	9	–
Johnny Armour (GB)	–	10	–
Vacant	–	–	2
F. Rakkiatgym (INDO)	–	–	4
Lehlo Ledwaba (SA)	11	–	6
Fahsung 3K-Battery (THAI)	–	–	7
Hector Julia Avila (DR)	12	–	8
Jose Luis Valbuena (ARG)	–	–	9
David Donis (USA)	–	–	10

BANTAMWEIGHTS	WBC	WBA	IBF
Veerapol Sahaprom (THAI)	**C**	**–**	**–**
Paul Ayala (USA)	**–**	**C**	**–**
Tim Austin (USA)	**–**	**–**	**C**
Genaro Garcia (USA)	1	10	–
Adan Vargas (MEX)	2	2	4
Jess Maca (PHIL)	3	–	–
Toshiaki Nishioka (JAP)	4	–	–
Johnny Bredahl (DEN)	5	4	8
Diego Morales (MEX)	6	–	–
Rafael Marquez (MEX)	7	7	5
Mark Johnson (USA)	8	–	–
Ricardo Barajas (MEX)	9	–	–
Jorge Lacierva (MEX)	10	–	–
Eidy Moya (VEN)	–	1	–
Leo Gamez (VEN)	–	3	–
Toshiaki Nishioka (JAP)	–	5	–
Sahoiu Sithchai Condo (THAI)	–	6	–
Hugo Dianzo (MEX)	–	8	–
Diego Morales (MEX)	–	9	9
Vacant	–	–	1
Vacant	–	–	2
Pete Frissina (USA)	–	–	3
Danny Romero (USA)	–	–	6
Juan Cordoba (ARG)	–	–	7
Jesus Perez (COL)	–	–	10

JR. BANTAMWEIGHTS	WBC	WBA	IBF
Masanori Tokuyama (JAP)	**C**	**–**	**–**
Setsuo Kobayashi (JAP)	**–**	**C**	**–**
Felix Machado (VEN)	**–**	**–**	**C**
Gerry Penalosa (PHIL)	1	–	9
Dimitri Kirilov (RUS)	2	12	–
Kazuhiro Ryuko (JAP)	3	–	–
Martin Castillo (MEX)	4	–	3
Reynaldo Hurtado (COL)	5	–	–
Chatchai Sasakul (THAI)	6	–	–
Vernie Torres (USA)	7	–	5
Luis Bolanos (COL)	8	11	8
Oscar Andrade (MEX)	9	–	–
Saen Sow Ploenchit (THAI)	10	2	6
Alexander Munoz (VEN)	–	1	–
Mbwana Matumla (TNZ)	–	3	–
Jesus Rojas (VEN)	–	4	4
Sornpichai Pisnurachank (THAI)	–	5	–
Hideki Todaka (JAP)	12	6	–
Yokthai Sithoar (THAI)	–	7	–
Kazuhiro Ryuko (JAP)	–	8	–
Adonis Rivas (NIC)	–	9	7
Samson 3K-Battery (THAI)	–	10	–
Vacant	–	–	1
Vacant	–	–	2
Mark Johnson (USA)	–	–	10

FLYWEIGHTS	WBC	WBA	IBF
Pongsaklek Wonjongkam (THAI)	**C**	**–**	**–**
Eric Morel (USA)	**–**	**C**	**–**
Irene Pacheco (COL)	**–**	**–**	**C**
Alex Ali Baba (GHA)	1	–	7
Malcolm Tunacao (PHIL)	2	–	–
Mike Trejo (USA)	3	4	4
Alexander Mahmutov (RUS)	4	6	3
Hiroshi Nakano (JAP)	5	12	–
Wandee Chor Chareon (THAI)	6	–	–
Randy Mangubat (PHIL)	7	–	–
Hussein Hussein (AUSTRL)	8	–	–
Masaki Nakamuna (JAP)	9	8	–
Damaen Kelly (GB)	10	10	11
Denkaosaen Kaowitch (THAI)	–	1	–
Mzukisi Sikali (SA)	21	2	–
Isidro Garcia (MEX)	–	3	–
Alejandro Montiel (MEX)	12	5	10
Jose Lopez (VEN)	–	7	–
Gilberto Gonzalez (VEN)	–	9	–
Vacant	–	–	1
Vacant	–	–	2
Hawk Makepula (SA)	–	–	5
David Guerault (FRA)	19	–	6
Hussein Hussein (LEB)	–	–	8
Angel Priolo (COL)	–	–	9

JR. FLYWEIGHTS	WBC	WBA	IBF
Yosam Choi (KOR)	**C**	**–**	**–**
Rosendo Alvarez (NIC)	**–**	**C**	**–**
Ricardo Lopez (MEX)	**–**	**–**	**C**
Jorge Arce (MEX)	1	5	3
Juanito Rubillar (PHIL)	2	–	12
Hidenobu Honda (JAP)	3	2	–
Melchor Cob Castro (MEX)	4	6	8
Saman Sorjaturong (THAI)	5	11	4
Jesus Martinez (MEX)	6	–	–
Takayuki Korogi (JAP)	7	–	–
Eric Ortiz (MEX)	8	8	–
Agustin Luna (MEX)	9	–	–
Pilkoo Kang (KOR)	10	–	–
Pichitnoi C. Siriwat (THAI)	–	1	–
Yura Dimas (MON)	–	3	–
Bebis Mendoza (COL)	–	4	9
Deeden Kengkarun (THAI)	–	7	–
Wolf Tokimitsu (JAP)	–	9	–
Masibulele Makepula (SA)	–	10	–
Vacant	–	–	1
Zolani Petelo (SA)	11	–	2
Fahlan Sakreerin (THAI)	–	–	5
Everardo Morales (MEX)	–	–	6
Juan Keb Baas (MEX)	22	–	7
Anis Roga (INDO)	–	–	10

STRAWWEIGHTS	WBC	WBA	IBF
Jose Antonio Aguirre (MEX)	**C**	**–**	**–**
Chana Porpaoin (THAI)	**–**	**C**	**–**
Roberto Leyva (MEX)	**–**	**–**	**C**
Yasuo Tokimitsu (JAP)	1	–	–
Hiroshi Nakajima (JAP)	2	–	–
Khulile Makeba (SA)	3	12	–
Joma Gamboa (PHIL)	4	4	10
Hiroshi Matsumoto (JAP)	5	6	6
Ernesto Rubillar (PHIL)	6	–	–
Erdene Chuluun (MON)	7	–	–
Isaac Bustos (MEX)	8	–	–
Noel Arambulet (VEN)	9	1	–
Noel Tunacao (PHIL)	10	–	–
Jose Garcia (COL)	–	2	–
Keitaro Hoshino (JAP)	–	3	–
Kim Ki Hwan (KOR)	–	5	–
Hiroshi Nakajima (JAP)	–	7	7
Fasan Pongsawan (THAI)	–	8	–
Yutaka Niida (JAP)	–	9	–
Daniel Reyes (COL)	–	10	5
Vacant	–	–	1
Vacant	–	–	2
Wandee Chor Chareon (THAI)	–	–	3
Miguel Barrera (MEX)	13	–	4
Surachai Saengmorokot (THAI)	–	–	8
Mohamed Rachman (INDO)	27	–	9

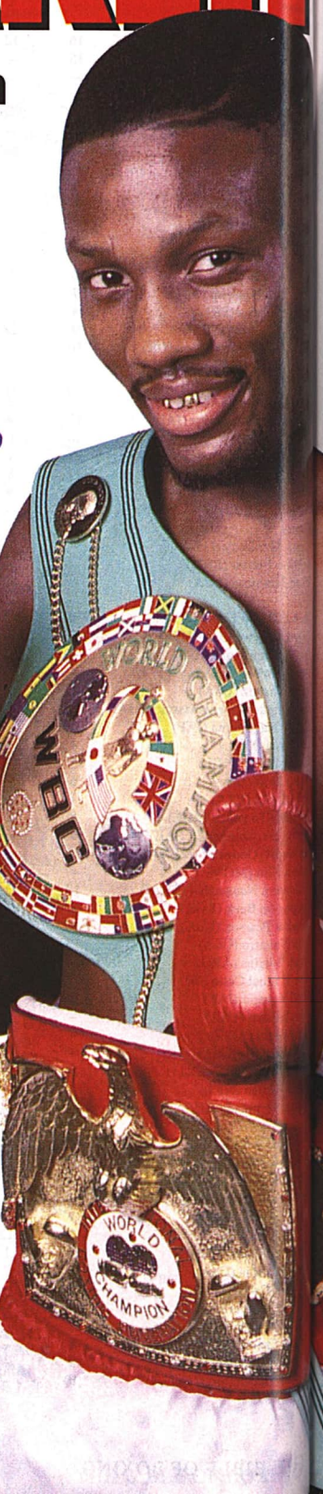
CLASSIC

From THE RING, April 1990

PERNELL WHITAKER

THE RING's Fighter Of The Year

"This Means More To Me Than Money"



By Jeff Ryan

Pernell Whitaker is sidetracked. For him, that's nothing new. He's been detoured by a loss in the Olympic Box-offs en route to the gold at the '84 Games; by injuries en route to a title shot; by some unjust scoring en route to the world title; and, recently, by a lack of recognition en route to superstar status. But now, more than an hour late for a photo session, he is sitting in, of all places, a Virginia Beach gas station. The man who owns a WBC belt, an IBF belt, and is en route to pick up the belt awarded to THE RING's Fighter of the Year, can't find himself a fan belt.

"Pete [as he's known to his friends] just called and said they're trying to get him one," reports one of the trainers at Wareing's Gym, a palace of pumping iron and pectorals that is Whitaker's usual training spot and the site of today's rendezvous. "He said he'll be here soon."

Of course he will. Never doubted it for a second. No matter what obstacles he encounters, doesn't Whitaker always end up where he wants to be? At 1:30, about 90 minutes later, he finally strolls into the ironworks, stopping to say hello to a few regulars. Standing amid the hulks and the bulks, the 5'5", 135-pound "Sweet Pea" looks like the "Before" picture in a Charles Atlas ad. And isn't that ironic? This is a champion, after all, who spent 1989 kicking sand on the rest of the lightweight division.

Just five days earlier, he had stopped Martin Galvan in the third round of a non-title bout in Paris. It was the exclamation point on a year that saw him outpoint Greg Haugen for the IBF crown, kayo the division's hardest puncher, Louie Lomeli, and decision Jose Luis Ramirez for the WBC belt. You wanna talk dominance? Whitaker fought a total of 30 rounds in '89, and it can be argued that he didn't lose a single one of them. Hell, even Steffi Graf drops a set every once in a while.

Despite the unscheduled visit to Mr. Goodwrench, Whitaker's mood on this day is upbeat. He is relaxed and cooperative, and during a tiring 40 minutes of posing with his belts—more hardware than you'd find in a Tru Value store—he voices but one teeny-weeny complaint.

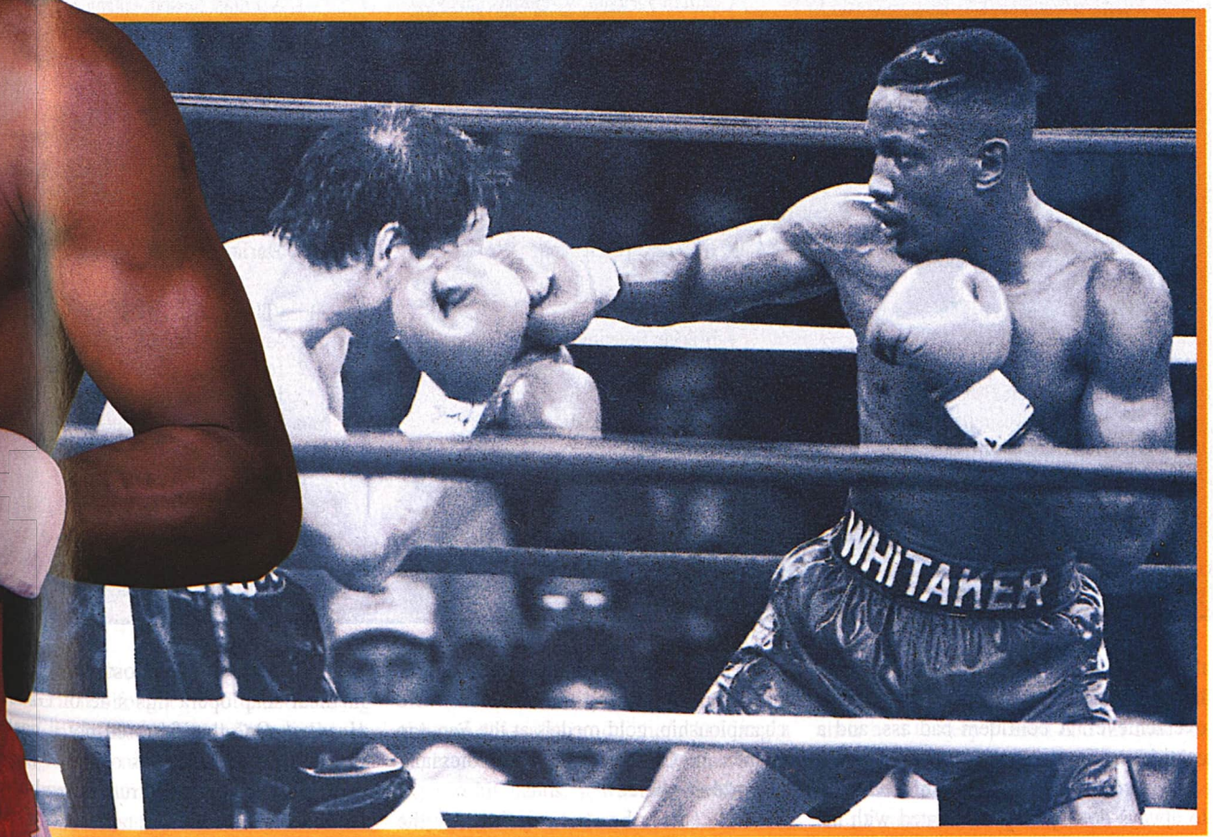
"Man," he says to his mother and father, who are seated a few feet away, "all this forced smilin' is hurting my jaw."

Most days, the Cheshire cat with the goatee has to force the smile off his face. He may or may not be boxing's best overall fighter. He is surely its most positive thinker. Whitaker is a smile-and-handshake guy in a sneer-and-backstab business, someone whose pleasures are simple: movies, pickup basketball games, and people smiling back at him.

He is a teammate who was more enthused by his fellow Olympians winning their pro titles than he was by capturing his own. A fighter, who, after being robbed by the judges in his first world title bout, spent the rest of the night consoling his sobbing trainer, Lou Duva. A son who bought his mother a nicer house than he bought himself. A satisfied customer who keeps his title belts on display at Wareing's because he knows it's good for their business. And a conscientious role model who won't ever refuse an autograph request, regardless of where he's approached.

"If you get too big-headed, then when you take that first fall, people only remember you being arrogant," he explains. "And when you go to them for condolence, they're gonna turn you down."

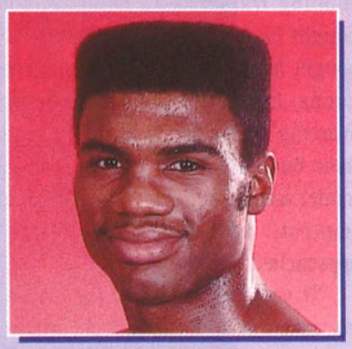
He is a champion who seems to be farther removed from the possibility of losing than any other, except, perhaps, Mike Tyson. Yet, he talks often of that "first fall." He won't watch tapes of his opponents, choosing instead to let his trainers completely map out his strategy. The reason? So that he can absolve himself of blame if anything goes wrong. He is a



"Sweet Pea" fought a total of 30 rounds in '89, and was so dominant, it was debatable whether or not he lost a single round. Whitaker's first step toward success came with this lopsided decision over tough guy Greg Haugen to garner the IBF lightweight title.

It took five long years since turning pro to win his first world title, but Whitaker certainly exploded in 1989, taking the IBF and WBC lightweight titles. At the end of the year, he added add another belt to his collection by being named THE RING's Fighter of the Year.

THE RING RATINGS, April 1990



Julian Jackson

HEAVYWEIGHTS
1. **Mike Tyson**, Catskill, NY
2. **Evander Holyfield**, Atlanta, GA
3. **Michael Dokes**, Las Vegas, NV
4. **Francesco Damiani**, Italy
5. **Tim Witherspoon**, Philadelphia, PA
6. **Orlin Norris**, Campo, CA
7. **Buster Douglas**, Columbus, OH
8. **Carl Williams**, White Plains, NY
9. **Razor Ruddock**, Canada
10. **Gary Mason**, England

CRUISERWEIGHTS
1. **Carlos DeLeon**, Puerto Rico
2. **Taoufik Belbouli**, France
3. **Robert Daniels**, Miami, FL
4. **Dwight Muhammad Qawi**, Cherry Hill, NJ
5. **Glenn McCrory**, England
6. **Nate Miller**, Philadelphia, PA
7. **Anaclet Wamba**, France
8. **Patrick Lumumba**, Kenya
9. **James Warring**, Miami, FL
10. **Sammy Reeson**, England

LIGHT HEAVYWEIGHTS
1. **Virgil Hill**, Las Vegas, NV
2. **Prince Charles Williams**, Broomall, PA
3. **Michael Moorer**, Detroit, MI
4. **Jeff Harding**, Australia
5. **Frankie Swindell**, Houston, TX
6. **Dennis Andries**, Detroit, MI
7. **Leslie Stewart**, Trinidad & Tobago
8. **Joe Lasisi**, Las Vegas, NV
9. **Mike Sedillo**, Chino, CA
10. **Uriah Grant**, Miami Beach, FL

SUPER MIDDLEWEIGHTS
1. **Ray Leonard**, Potomac, MD
2. **Thomas Hearns**, Las Vegas, NV
3. **Frank Tate**, Houston, TX
4. **In Chul Baek**, South Korea
5. **Christophe Tiozzo**, France
6. **Lindell Holmes**, Detroit, MI
7. **Tony Byrd**, Los Angeles, CA
8. **James Kinchen**, San Diego, CA
9. **Fulgencio Obelmejias**, Venezuela
10. **Victor Cordova**, Panama

MIDDLEWEIGHTS
1. **Michael Nunn**, Los Angeles, CA
2. **Sumbu Kalambay**, Italy
3. **Mike McCallum**, Brooklyn, NY
4. **Roberto Duran**, Miami, FL
5. **Iran Barkley**, Bronx, NY
6. **Michael Watson**, England
7. **Herol Graham**, England
8. **Steve Collins**, Brockton, MA
9. **Nigel Benn**, England
10. **Dennis Milton**, Bronx, NY

JUNIOR MIDDLEWEIGHTS
1. **Julian Jackson**, Virgin Islands
2. **John Mugabi**, Tampa, FL
3. **Gianfranco Rosi**, Italy
4. **John David Jackson**, Detroit, MI
5. **Terry Norris**, Campo, CA
6. **Darrin Van Horn**, Lexington, KY
7. **Robert Hines**, Philadelphia, PA
8. **Rene Jacquot**, France
9. **Donald Curry**, Fort Worth, TX
10. **Chris Pyatt**, England

WELTERWEIGHTS
1. **Marlon Starling**, South Windsor, CT
2. **Simon Brown**, Washington, D.C.
3. **Lloyd Honeyghan**, England
4. **Mark Breland**, Brooklyn, NY
5. **Buddy McGirt**, Brentwood, NY
6. **Tyrone Trice**, France
7. **Maurice Blocker**, Washington, D.C.
8. **Glenwood Brown**, Plainfield, NJ
9. **Aaron Davis**, Bronx, NY
10. **Nino LaRocca**, Italy

JUNIOR WELTERWEIGHTS
1. **Julio Cesar Chavez**, Mexico
2. **Meldrick Taylor**, Philadelphia, PA
3. **Juan Coggi**, Argentina
4. **Roger Mayweather**, Las Vegas, NV
5. **Ras-I Bramble**, Hampton Township,
6. **Loreto Garza**, Sacramento, CA
7. **Hector Camacho**, Big Cypress, FL
8. **Frankie Randall**, Morristown, NJ
9. **Sammy Fuentes**, Puerto Rico
10. **Jose Luis Ramirez**, France

LIGHTWEIGHTS
1. **Pernell Whitaker**, Norfolk, VA
2. **Edwin Rosario**, Puerto Rico
3. **Greg Haugen**, Henderson, NV
4. **Freddie Pendleton**, Miami, FL
5. **Tracy Spann**, Plainfield, NJ
6. **John Duplessis**, New Orleans, LA
7. **David Gonzales**, San Jose, CA
8. **Louie Lomeli**, Melrose Park, IL
9. **Chil Sung Chun**, South Korea
10. **Poli Diaz**, Spain

JUNIOR LIGHTWEIGHTS
1. **Azumah Nelson**, Ghana
2. **Brian Mitchell**, South Africa
3. **John-John Molina**, Puerto Rico
4. **Jeff Fenech**, Australia
5. **Tony Lopez**, Sacramento, CA
6. **Lupe Suarez**, Corpus Christi, TX
7. **Genaro Hernandez**, Los Angeles, CA
8. **Calvin Grove**, Pottstown, PA
9. **Juan LaPorte**, New York, NY
10. **Mario Martinez**, Mexico

FEATHERWEIGHTS
1. **Antonio Esparragoza**, Venezuela
2. **Jeff Fenech**, Australia
3. **Jorge Paez**, Mexico
4. **Louie Espinoza**, Phoenix, AZ
5. **Maurizio Stecca**, Italy
6. **Marcos Villasana**, Mexico
7. **Georgie Navarro**, Vineland, NJ
8. **Troy Dorsey**, Dallas, TX
9. **Ricardo Cepeda**, Bronx, NY
10. **Paul Hodkinson**, England

masterful craftsman fulfilling his incredible potential and, at the same time, a true overachiever. A confident bad ass, and a cautious realist.

The confidence stems from the ability to always do anything he wanted with his fists. Anything from punching out sailors from the nearby Navy base in his hometown of Norfolk, Virginia, when he was just 13, to capturing the amateur world championship, gold medals at the Pan-Am Games and Olympics, and two professional world title belts.

The caution has been molded by the numerous setbacks that often made it appear that The Pernell Whitaker Story was going to be the most complicated medical soap opera this side of *General Hospital*. One that featured not a cast of thousands, but thousands of casts. Not to mention several sets of crutches and a few hundred miles of first aid tape.

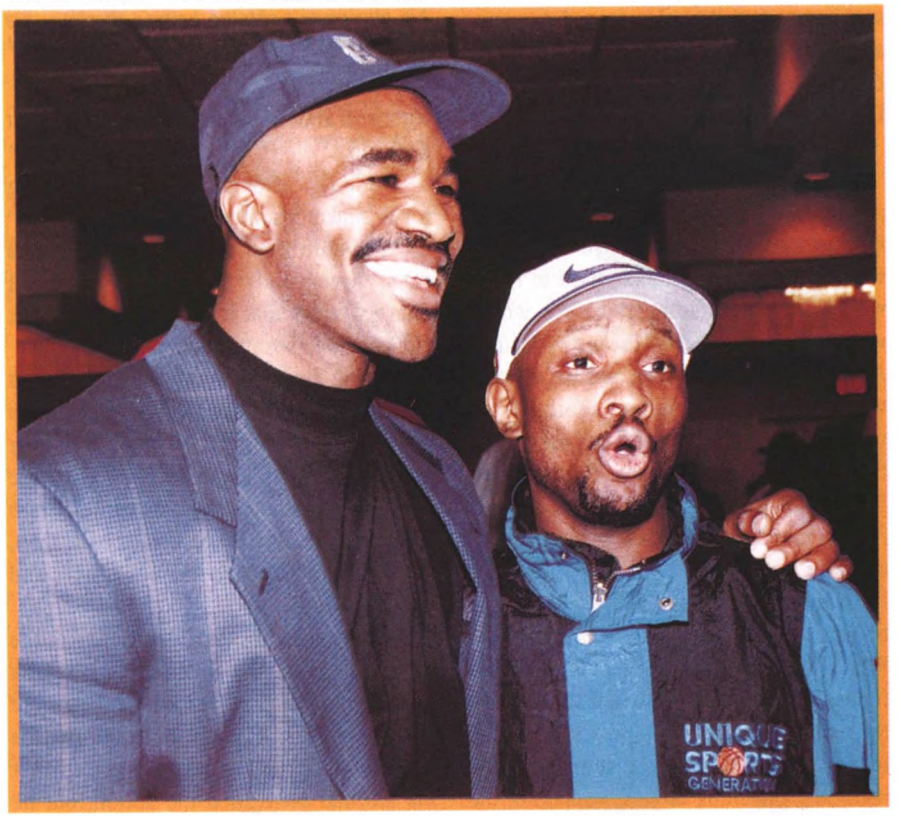
He is incredibly loyal to those around him. He's had the same promoter, man-

JUNIOR FEATHERWEIGHTS
1. Daniel Zaragoza, Mexico
2. Jesus Salud, San Diego, CA
3. Seung Hoon Lee, South Korea
4. Juan Jose Estrada, Mexico
5. Fabrice Benichou, France
6. Kenny Mitchell, Houston, TX
7. Pedro Decima, Argentina
8. Paul Banke, Quail Valley, CA
9. Jose Sanabria, Venezuela
10. Jesse Benavides, Corpus Christi, TX

BANTAMWEIGHTS
1. Raul Perez, Mexico
2. Orlando Canizales, Laredo, TX
3. Luisito Espinosa, Philippines
4. Gerardo Martinez, San Jose, CA
5. Israel Contreras, Venezuela
6. Khaokor Galaxy, Thailand
7. Moon Sung Kil, South Korea
8. Wilfredo Vasquez, Puerto Rico
9. Pepillo Valdez, Mexico
10. Hurley Snead, Detroit, MI

JUNIOR BANTAMWEIGHTS
1. Khaosai Galaxy, Thailand
2. Nana Konadu, Ghana
3. Gilberto Roman, Mexico
4. Jose Ruiz, Puerto Rico
5. Juan Polo, Colombia
6. Thanomsak Sithbaobey, Thailand
7. Elly Pical, Indonesia
8. Santos Laciar, Argentina
9. Yong Heun Lee, South Korea
10. Welcome Ncita, South Africa

FLYWEIGHTS
1. Sot Chitalada, Thailand
2. Jesus Rojas, Venezuela
3. Fidel Bassa, Colombia
4. Dave McAuley, Ireland
5. Jung Koo Chang, South Korea
6. Ramon Medel, San Antonio, TX
7. Javier Lucas, Mexico
8. Richard Clarke, Jamaica
9. Leopard Tamakuma, Japan
10. Romy Navarette, Philippines



One of Whitaker's strengths has always been his loyalty. Sweet Pea had the same promoter, managers, and trainer (Lou Duva, above) throughout the first five years of his career, a rarity in boxing. That loyalty extended to supporting former Olympic teammates like Evander Holyfield (below) as well.

agers, and trainer throughout his five-year career. He has fought all but one of his big bouts in front of the home folks in Virginia. Ask him if he'd ever consider squaring off with his buddy, Meldrick Taylor, and he cringes as though he's just caught a left hook to the solar plexus. There will be other lucrative purses. Friendships are to be cherished.

Friends, he'll tell you, are the reason that on this afternoon, he's holding a Fighter of the Year belt and not a crack pipe in his hands. It was his friends who kept him from being sucked into the whirlpool of drugs and crime swirling around Young Park, the Norfolk housing project where he grew up. Whitaker's mother, Novella, and father, Raymond, did their best to keep Pernell and his four sisters and two brothers out of trouble, but they couldn't watch their kids 24 hours a day. Fortunately, they had help.

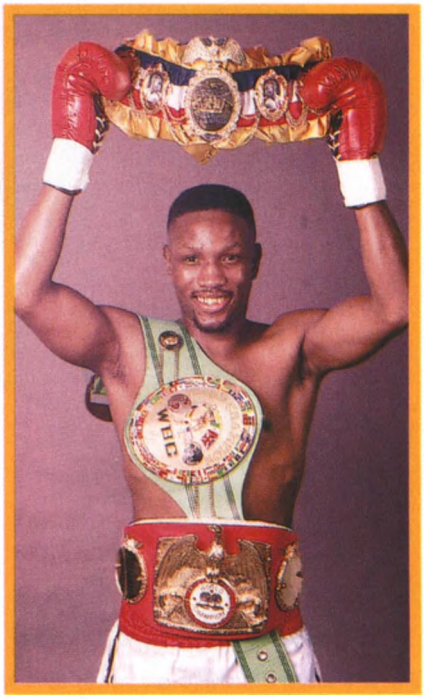
"When I lived in Young Park, some of my friends were doing drugs," Whitaker

recalls, "but they never did it around me and never let me get like them. If they were doin' it, it would be, 'Here comes Pete, we better get rid of this stuff in case the police come and we're all together.' A lot of them boxed, too, so they knew I was going someplace. They would never even let me stay out late. At 11 o'clock, they'd say, 'Pete, you gotta go, man.' Those guys were like trainers and coaches to me. Some of 'em are in jail now, some died, but I feel like they're all still with me."

It is because Young Park holds out such little promise for its residents that Pernell Whitaker is an overachiever. Even with his guardian angels watching over him, the odds of Whitaker making it out of the projects were long, at best. Growing up, he often lamented the lack of a local role model. So he looked elsewhere for his inspiration. Across the street, as a matter of fact. There, looming like a giant flying saucer, was the Scope, Norfolk's 13,000-seat arena. And Whitaker started dreaming about the day he'd be champion and could defend his title in his own backyard. Literally.

"It was 13 steps away," says Whitaker, "and I always said, 'One day, I'm going across the street. I'm gonna bring a title fight to the Scope. I went there all the time when I was a little kid. We used to find a way to sneak in sometime. We would watch the Squires [of the now-defunct ABA], Dr. J played there, and we'd watch wrestling. I remember seeing [pro wrestler] Wahoo McDaniel and these guys fallin' on the concrete floor. That was real. I don't see why they call it fake. It looks real to me. You can't practice falling on the floor."

The day Whitaker had been dreaming of arrived this past August, when he made WBC titlist Ramirez, a veteran of 111 pro fights, look like a kid who had strolled into the ring by mistake on the way to his piano lesson. Whitaker boxed marvelously, inventing punching angles, peppering the muscular brawler with blazing combinations, and even dominating the infighting. For Sweet Pea, it was the sweetest revenge. Seventeen months earlier, he had administered a similar, though less thorough, beating to Ramirez in the Mexican's adopted home of Paris (Whitaker clearly won nine of the 12 rounds), and then crumpled to the canvas in despair as he heard



Receiving The Ring belt meant more than money to Whitaker, who was disappointed that his star wasn't shining beyond Virginia, his home state. "I don't get any money for it, but I get some recognition," Sweet Pea said.

Ramirez announced the winner via split decision.

Naturally, though, it didn't take long for Whitaker's smile to reappear.

"I couldn't get too upset over it," he says. "Everybody around me did, but I didn't. I knew that it was God testing me. He wanted to see if I could pass."

Yet, in those quiet moments alone with his thoughts, Whitaker wondered why his resolve was being tested over and over again. As far back as the 1984 Olympic Box-offs he had been confronted with adversity, the difference being, back then, he wanted to give in to the tough times and simply walk away.

Whitaker had beaten Joey Belinc at the Olympic Trials, and entering the Box-offs at Caesars Palace, he needed just one more win to secure a spot on the team. On the first night, Whitaker was convinced that his jab had controlled the action, but he lost a 5-0 decision. Frustrated, he went back to his hotel room, grabbed his suitcase, and yelled, "To hell with tomorrow. I'm going home." He was serious.

"I figured, if I'm gonna come back and fight hard, and you're gonna give him the decision again, you might as well go ahead and let him make the team. You don't need me."

Whitaker's father, his trainer, Lou Duva, his teammate, Mark Breland, and Rovonda Anthony, who was then Sweet Pea's girlfriend, all tried to talk him out of leaving. But it was the quietest voice that he heard the loudest, the voice of his mother.

"You promised me something," she told her son. "A gold medal and a home."

"That brought me back into the ring," Whitaker says. "If I didn't fight, my dream would have been gone and I'd have to look at her face after I promised her something and didn't deliver."

Whitaker delivered on his first promise, decisioning Belinc the next night and then capturing the gold with four decisions and a knockout in Los Angeles. When he turned pro, he made good on the second promise, moving his parents out of Young Park and into a house on the outskirts of town, in an area called "The Gardens." Now, their only hassle is the occasional jet noise from nearby Norfolk International.

"When we went looking to buy the house, I was showing my mother some townhouses," Whitaker says with a chuckle, "and I said, 'Aren't these nice?' She said, 'No, I want a real house, not a townhouse.'"

The trappings of success—not to mention a Fighter of the Year belt—may have come to Whitaker a lot sooner had his trials and tribulations not continued for the four years after the Olympics. First, in 1985, he suffered a broken left hand while sparring and a fractured left foot while—get this—trying to slam-dunk a basketball. In 1986, he fractured the hand again, this time while decisioning John Montes Jr. Surgery followed, but a left landing high on the head of Ramirez in Paris rebroke the hand yet again.

The frustrations mounted with each passing X-ray, but Whitaker kept focused. And kept his sense of humor. The broken ankle kept him off a Virginia Beach card featuring Taylor, Breland, Tyrell Biggs, and Evander Holyfield on December 21, 1985, but Sweet Pea stole the show anyway. After the main event, he and his sweetheart Rovonda climbed into the ring and got married.

In 1989, Sweet Pea managed to stay healthy, the talent and promise reached an intersection at the same time, and the result was awesome. In February, Whitaker wiped the smirk off IBF champion

Most experts felt Whitaker won nine of 12 rounds against Jose Luis Ramirez in '88, so when Sweet Pea heard Ramirez won by split decision, he crumpled to the canvas in disbelief. Seventeen months later, Whitaker exacted his revenge on Ramirez, taking the WBC lightweight title.

Haugen's face with a breathtaking display of speed and accuracy. Haugen, who wasn't even intimidated when he fought 220-pound lumberjacks in the gin mills of Alaska years earlier, was reluctant to throw punches for fear of being answered with blinding counters. It didn't matter. He got hit anyway, and in round six was put down for the first time in 26 career outings.

Ironically, it is a lack of power that remains Whitaker's biggest weakness. He hammered Haugen and Ramirez at will, but only scored a total of one knockdown in 24 rounds against them. Knockouts in Whitaker's next two bouts, a pay-per-view defense against Freddie Pendleton that was scheduled for the undercard of the Hector Camacho-Vinny Pazienza bout on February 3, and an April shootout with junior lightweight king Azumah Nelson on HBO, would go a long way toward getting Whitaker the mainstream notice he still hasn't managed to obtain.

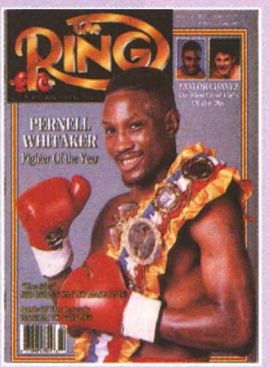
Whitaker admits he's disappointed that his star is still shining, for the most part, only over Virginia, but as always, he finds something positive about the situation.

"Somebody had to be watching me and saying good things about me if you named me Fighter of the Year," he says. "This means more to me than money. I don't get any money for it, but I get some recognition. I'd rather have that than the money. This belt is something I'm gonna always have, to show my kids and my grandkids."

And if they ever wonder why Grandpa never got big-headed, like so many other fighters did through the years, he has something else he can show them: his robe from the Galvan fight. It was made for him in France, where, it is safe to assume, either recognition of American champions or English language dictionaries are in short supply. The name on the back of the robe: "Sweat Pea."

The realist in Pernell Whitaker should know that not even two world title belts, a gold medal, and THE RING'S Fighter of the Year honors means a whole lot to a frayed fan belt or a Frenchman who can't spell. ■

THE RING, April 1990



The Cover: Pernell Whitaker enjoyed a breakout year in 1989, winning the IBF and WBC lightweight crowns, plus THE RING's Fighter of the Year belt. Whitaker experienced arguably the best year of his career, taking out Greg Haugen for the IBF lightweight title, then dominating Jose Luis Ramirez to win the WBC belt. In 26 completed title rounds, Whitaker was a remarkable 24-1-1, according to THE RING.

Tiger Remembered: Former middleweight champion Tiger Flowers was remembered not only for his war with Harry Greb in 1926, but for the man he was outside the ring. "That Flowers—he's not only a good fighter, he's a good man," Greb once said of his old rival.

What If?: THE RING asked three experts what would have happened if Carlos Monzon (pictured) ever met Marvelous Marvin Hagler in their primes. All three experts picked Monzon, claiming his jab would have given Hagler problems. "Monzon would always be one step ahead of Marvin in a hard fight," Philadelphia-based promoter J Russell Peltz said.

The First Great Fight Of The '90s: THE RING took a look ahead at the upcoming megabout between Meldrick Taylor and Julio Cesar Chavez. Both were undefeated junior welterweight champions, and both were action fighters. Many experts predicted a great fight. In this case, they were right.

Fighter Of The Month: Flamboyant Jorge Paez earned the honors with his sixth-round knockout of Lupe Gutierrez. Paez struggled to make weight, having to take four trips to the scale before defending the IBF featherweight title for the fifth time.

THE A, B, C & DEAS OF BOXING

THE UPPERCUT

By Tommy Deas

You've watched the world's best fighters and read about them in this magazine, and now you want to give boxing a try, or at least learn a little more about the mechanics of the sport. Welcome to THE RING'S bi-monthly instructional feature on boxing's basics. Bear in mind, the techniques described here are just one of many approaches to the Sweet Science. The most important thing is to find a good coach and follow his instructions. All instructions on these pages are geared for an orthodox, or right-handed, stance. If you are left-handed, merely turn everything around.

The uppercut is something of a specialty punch, an effective weapon to be used in certain situations that can have a devastating effect on the opponent. It can also be used as a setup punch to land a big hook or right cross.

Knowing when to throw the uppercut, and when not to throw it, is as important as knowing how to throw it. The uppercut is a punch best used at close quarters. When thrown from the outside, it leaves you wide open for a counterpunch that can be more harmful to you than the uppercut is to your opponent.

The uppercut is most effective against a shorter opponent, or one who fights in a crouch with his head lower than yours. Once he steps into close range, he becomes a prime target for the uppercut.

The uppercut can be thrown with either hand, but the left uppercut thrown with the lead hand is much more difficult to master. You should start out working on the right uppercut and only move on to the left uppercut after you have mastered it.

The key component to throwing the right uppercut is the use of the shoulders. Starting with the basic stance, you should change the angle of your shoulders by lowering the right shoulder, raising the left shoulder to the ceiling. If you try to throw the uppercut with your shoulders parallel to the ground, you will end up with much more of an arm punch that has a far less powerful impact.

Keep your hands in their normal punching position as you lower the right shoulder. The uppercut is thrown much more with the body than with the arm. If the opponent is particularly low, you will probably have to bend your knees to lower yourself into position so that the punch travels an arc that ends up exploding upward toward the target.

Once you have lowered the right shoulder, shoulder rotation is the most important element to properly throwing an uppercut. Roll your shoulders into the punch, rolling your right shoulder forward and upward through the target. As you roll the shoulder, you will need to open up the angle of your arm at the elbow so that your wrist as at about a 90 degree angle from the upper arm. As the punch lands, the arm should be roughly in the form of the letter L.

Super middleweight Jesse Marsh demonstrates the proper method for throwing the uppercut. Note that the left shoulder is raised at the same time that the right shoulder is lowered. Shoulder rotation is the key to an effective uppercut.

Due to an electronic error in sending text to our printer, the "A, B, C, And Deas Of Boxing" that appeared in the November 2001 edition of THE RING EXTRA is being re-run here in its entirety.

At the point of impact, you can add a little more leverage to the uppercut by pushing against the canvas with the balls of your feet and adding a little *ummph* with a slight burst upward at the knees.

If the opponent is crouched over, you may want to aim just a little below the head, at a point high on the chest. This gives you a better chance of landing the punch somewhere and gives the opponent less opportunity to get out of the way. If he tries to avoid the uppercut, aiming at a point high on the chest may result in a blow that lands squarely on the chin or face. If he doesn't move, you will still hit him in the chest.

The uppercut can be used as effectively when thrown to the body as to the head. When throwing an uppercut to the body, you may need to lean over to one side a little more to get a proper angle to punch at the torso, and open the angle of your arm a little more than 90 degrees, so that the fist is a little farther away from the shoulder.

As with the other basic punches in boxing, simply rewind your motion after you have landed (or missed) the punch. Rotate the shoulder back into position along the same path you used to throw the punch, drawing your fist back in close to your chin.

The left uppercut is a little more delicate and is often more of a finesse punch. The punching motion is the same as with the right uppercut, but you will need to bend your left knee more and drive up with it more than with the right uppercut. To throw the left uppercut as more than an arm punch takes a lot of practice.

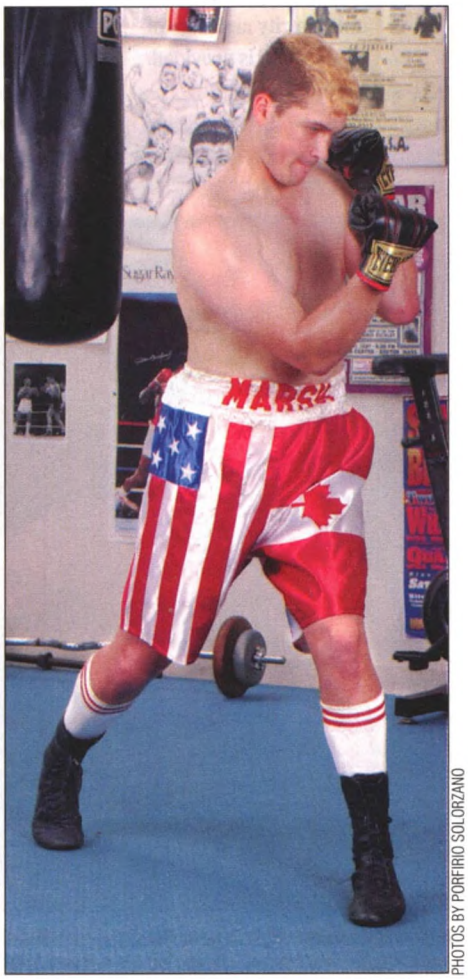
As a setup punch, the uppercut's value is that it can raise the opponent's chin into the path of a powerful followup blow. Once you begin to get comfortable with the uppercut, try following it with a left hook. Properly executed, you can raise the opponent's chin with the uppercut and then drop a left hook onto the jaw when the target is exposed. You can also throw the right uppercut and come back with a right cross with the same effect in an under-and-over combination.

The most common mistake made by beginners in throwing the uppercut is forgetting to roll the shoulders. The temptation is to simply drop the right hand under the target and then push upward with it. Not only does this result in a less forceful blow, it leaves you wide open when you drop your hand to set up the punch.

Another common mistake is forgetting to keep the chin tucked in when the punch travels upward. Make sure to always keep your chin down as you punch. With all punches, try to involve your whole body in the motion and focus the power into the fist as it lands. Make sure you hit with a tightly closed fist to insure maximum impact.

Up next: The basic workout. ■

Tommy Deas is a sportswriter for the Tuscaloosa [Alabama] News and a trainer of professional and amateur boxers.



PHOTOS BY PORFIRIO SOLORZANO

COME OUT WRITING

Letters may be edited for reasons of space and clarity. Send your comments to Come Out Writing, The Ring, P.O. Box 1148, Fort Washington, PA 19034. Or e-mail letters to comeoutwriting@yahoo.com. E-mailed letters will include the writer's e-mail address unless a city and state of origin is provided.

MURDEROUS MATCHMAKING

The death and serious injury of boxers can be avoided. Most people and some of the media are overlooking the real problem. The problem is not with boxing, but with the way the opponents are selected. Managers and promoters, especially those who sign high-priced Olympians, will do anything to protect their investments. Therefore, if a manager or promoters wants his boxer's record to be 25-0 with 25 knockouts, 25 inferior boxers are at risk of suffering the same fate as Beethavean Scottland.

The system for selecting opponents needs to be scrutinized thoroughly. Promoters and managers know that the commission will usually allow last-minute replacements (like Scottland) rather than call off the show, and they take advantage of it. Boxing commissions need to cancel a show or two and not be so lenient when boxers' lives are at risk. Until the people responsible for these mismatches are held accountable, things will never change. Someone, please step up.

COLIN MORGAN
New York, NY

LUCKY PAULIE

Paulie Ayala must have pictures of somebody important in a very compromising situation. I have never seen one fighter, an average one at that, receive so many gift decisions. Ever since the first Tapia fight, Ayala has had a guardian angel at his side, or to be more exact, ringside. I felt Johnny Bredahl, Hugo Dianzo, Bones Adams, and Johnny Tapia (twice) all did enough to beat Ayala. Before the Adams fight, HBO experts talked about Ayala building his legacy in boxing. He's already broken one record—the record for the most gift decisions.

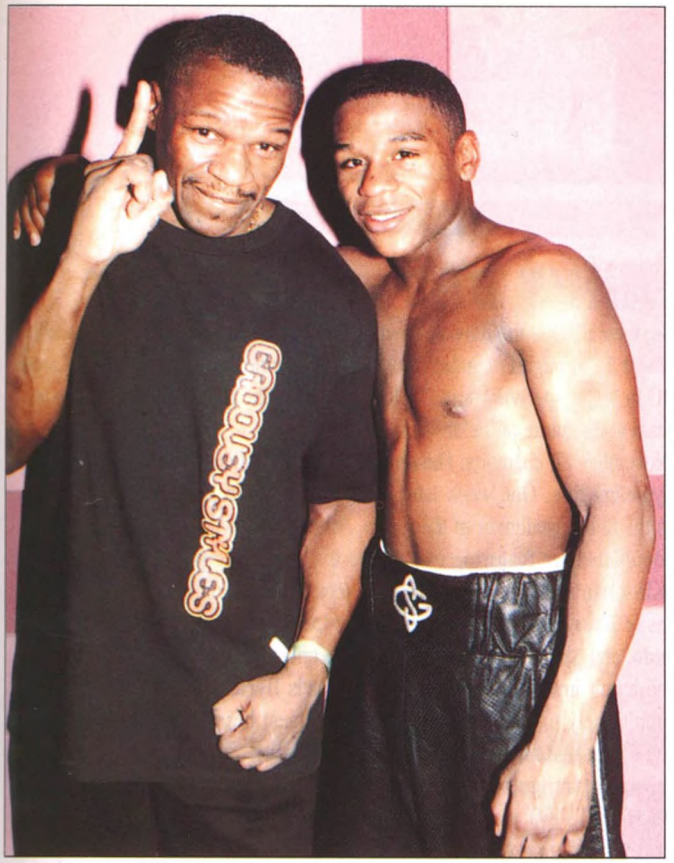
DEREK BENNETT
Vernon, CT

PHOTO BY CHRIS FARINA

How lucky can one fighter get? Reader Derek Bennett is skeptical about the series of close decisions that have gone Paulie Ayala's way, including his second bout with Johnny Tapia (pictured).

BEST OF THE BUNCH

My vote for the best trainer in boxing is Floyd Mayweather Sr. I've been a gym rat my entire 32 years, and while I can't say that I've seen them all train, I have seen Emanuel Steward, Teddy Atlas, Thel Torrance, Freddie Roach, Lou Duva, Jack Mosley, and even the great Eddie Futch. And what I can tell you is that everyone I've listened to, except Mayweather, is a carbon copy of one another. They have all been strong salesmen with popular



Who's the number-one trainer in boxing? Reader George Giourof believes it's Floyd Mayweather Sr., pictured here with his son, WBC super featherweight champion "Pretty Boy" Floyd Mayweather.

camera appeal. But to me, they also looked slow and methodical while training their pupils. Mayweather, on the other hand, is in tip-top shape, bouncing on his toes, breaking a sweat, and showing the hand speed of a man half his age. Watching him work the mitts with Floyd Jr. and Oscar De La Hoya is truly a sight to see. Mayweather will never win a popularity contest, but he will win the confidence of all his fighters.

GEORGE GIOUROF
Rancho Palos Verde, CA

WHO'S KIDDING WHO?

After hearing Oscar De La Hoya's comments following his victory over Francisco Castillejo, I felt compelled to voice my opinion. Oscar's comment that he is in the "driver's seat" and was going to dictate the terms of rematches with Felix Trinidad and Shane Mosley is laughable. Everyone realizes that De La Hoya is still a huge draw. However, Oscar lost to both Trinidad and Mosley, and it is De La Hoya who needs to avenge those losses, not the other way around.

Oscar's arrogance and conceit are easy to see and not lost on former fans of his. Get over yourself, Oscar. We can all see your "Golden Boy" image tarnishing every time you open your mouth.

GARY HORNUNG
N. Kingstown, RI

TONY'S TROUBLES

I have been a fan of Tony Ayala Jr. since the early-1980s, and after his recent fight with Santos Cardona, I would love to see him fight a rematch with Yory Boy Campas. However, the battle I hope he really wins is with the demons inside of him. I can relate to his troubles because I also have alcohol/drug problems. I hope Tony finds the same strength and tenacity to change his life that he shows in the ring. I'm sure it will be his toughest battle, and I wish him luck.

ERIC FLANAGAN
Tipton, MO

DOUBLE STANDARD?

Emanuel Steward said that he ended his professional relationship with Naseem Hamed because "The Prince" was not listening and took an unprofessional approach in preparing himself for his fight against Marco Antonio Barrera, which is understandable. But how can he then go on to say that this was not the case with Lennox Lewis in his preparation for Hasim Rahman?

I have read that Lewis spent most of his training time on a movie set with his mind more focused on Hollywood stardom than on defending the title in a foreign nation against a somewhat formidable challenger. He also didn't show up in South Africa until two weeks before the fight. And regardless of what Steward said, Lewis looked exhausted to me.

I have the utmost respect for Steward as a trainer and for Lennox as a great boxer, but a true professional never underestimates his opponents.

BRIAN WAGNER
Green Brook, NJ

SUGAR SHOCK!

I thought Larry Merchant's ambush of Sugar Shane Mosley after Shane's vicious knockout of Adrian Stone on HBO was totally unfair. I believe that Larry himself was startled by the knockout, and it caused him to look at Shane as something other than a nice guy with a great smile: a nice guy with a great smile—and that vicious killer instinct that all the great champions have.

It's obvious by turning down $1.4-million that Vernon Forrest has no immediate plans of fighting Sugar Shane. And does Larry feel that "Six Heads" Lewis is really a step up in competition for arguably the best fighter to come along since Sugar Ray Robinson? Take it easy, Larry.

ANTHONY DeDONA
Ozone Park, NY ■

PHOTO BY MARK W. HILL

After Shane Mosley's spectacular knockout of Adrian Stone, HBO's Larry Merchant criticized the quality of Sugar Shane's opposition. Reader Anthony DeDona thinks Merchant's comments were unfair and off the mark.

LOOKING AHEAD

By Eric Raskin

SIX OUT OF NINE AIN'T BAD

If heavyweight is boxing's "glamour" division, then HBO is the runway down which the world's biggest supermodels will be strutting this fall. In a 15-day span from November 17 through December 1, six of the top nine heavies in the world, according to THE RING's ratings, will be fighting on HBO or its pay-per-view arm, TVKO. And from the looks of things, every one of the fights could be competitive and highly significant to the future of the division.

Of course, it all kicks off with the biggie on November 17, champion **Hasim Rahman** vs. challenger **Lennox Lewis** for the world heavyweight title. One week later, on the 24th, **John Ruiz** will meet **Evander Holyfield** in the third installment of their saga. And the following Saturday, December 1, will see a doubleheader featuring two of the division's biggest and best prospects, **Wladimir Klitschko** and **Lance Whitaker**, in separate bouts. The three opponents being considered as of press time—for both men—were tough veteran **Ray Mercer**, undefeated **Fres Oquendo**, and upstart **Jameel McCline**. The only fighters rated among THE RING's top nine who aren't involved are **Mike Tyson**, **Chris Byrd**, and **Kirk Johnson**—three guys who aren't likely to take risky fights at the moment because they're the mandatory challengers to the recognized belts.

Lewis and Rahman kick off three weeks of heavyweight action

One of the more intriguing elements of the three-week series is the Ruiz-Holyfield fight, which HBO/TVKO passed on when **Don King** was trying to find a pay-per-view carrier for its original August 4 date.

"We were not interested in Holyfield-Ruiz as a TVKO event in the middle of the summer," said HBO Sports Executive Vice President **Kery Davis**. "However, we feel it is good programming for HBO in conjunction with the other heavyweight fights we are doing during that time period."

Beijing, China, remains a possibility for the fight site.

EXPANSION AT ESPN?

It's a simple formula: Good ratings equal more programming. *Friday Night Fights* is the highest-rated weekly program on ESPN2. *Tuesday Night Fights* scored even better in the ratings than *FNF* over the course of its experimental 13-week run this past summer. As a result, chances are very good that in 2002, boxing fans will be treated to even more boxing from the ESPN franchise.

According to ESPN boxing coordinator **Bob Yalen**, *FNF* will be back for its standard 50 episodes per year, and *TNF* will be back as well, almost certainly more than just 13 times.

"We're looking to expand *Tuesday Night Fights*, we just don't know how much yet," Yalen said in mid-September. "Our highest rated boxing show of the year came on a Tuesday, when **Tony Ayala** fought **Santos Cardona**. The ratings for the series, on the whole, were slightly north of the *Friday Night Fights* ratings."

There hasn't been a live boxing program on the flagship ESPN network since August '98, but that will probably change in '02. Yalen said that ESPN is considering everything from a quarterly special to a monthly program, although unfortunately, the budget for those shows would be no larger than for the ESPN2 shows.

Many of these proposals were close to being finalized as we went to press, so expect more specific information in next month's issue.

LISTEN UP

Veteran lightweight **Jesse James Leija** says his fighting days may be over if he can't nail down a big money fight within the next few months. "It's not worth it for $25,000 a fight at this point," Leija said. "There are easier ways for me to make that kind of money. If I can't get a big fight, I have no problem with walking away." Though **Hector Camacho Jr.** pulled out of an October rematch with Leija, the fight may be rescheduled for January, plus fights with **Arturo Gatti** or **Juan Lazcano** remain possibilities ... **Virgil Hill**, who won THE RING's 2000 Comeback of the Year award with his unexpected first-round kayo of **Fabrice Tiozzo** and then promptly vanished, will finally defend the WBA cruiserweight title December 1—357 days after winning the belt. **Cedric Kushner Promotions** won the purse bid for Hill's mandatory defense against **Jean Marc Mormeck** of France and will probably to hold the bout in Bismarck, North Dakota. ■

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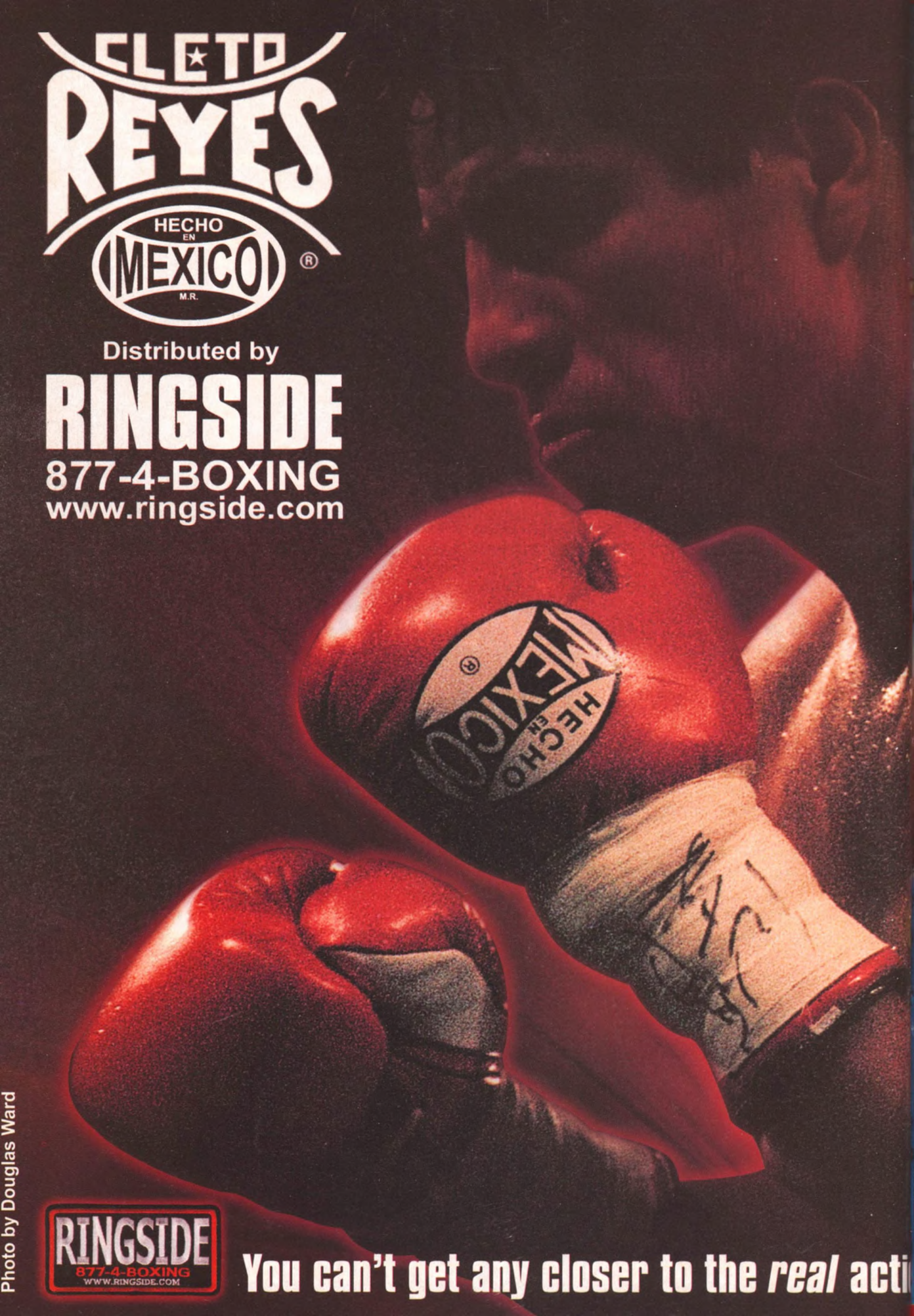
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